

Thirteen Bean Soup

<http://userealbutter.com/2008/10/20/thirteen-bean-soup-recipe/>

slightly modified from The Complete Book of Soups and Stews by Bernard Clayton, Jr.

3 1/2 cups dried beans (preferably a variety of at least seven, but go for more if you like)
[navy, pinto, cranberry, kidney, black-eyed, garbanzo, lima, etc.]
water to cover the beans
2 ham bones
10 cups of water
2 tbsps butter
2 medium onions, diced
2 medium carrots, diced
4 ribs celery, diced
1 clove garlic, minced
28 oz. canned tomatoes, including liquid
1 lb. kielbasa or some kind of garlic sausage
salt, if desired
black pepper, to taste

Soak the dried beans overnight in a large vessel with enough water to cover 3 inches above the beans. In a large pot, cover ham bones in enough water with 2 inches above the bones (about 10 cups). Bring water to boil and partially cover with lid, reduce heat and simmer over low for 2.5 hours. Skim off brown film as it collects on the surface. Drain the beans. While meat is cooking, place beans in another saucepan and add water to cover plus 2 or 3 inches above beans (about 4 quarts). Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour or until the beans are al dente – not mushy. Drain the beans and set aside. In a large skillet, heat the butter to foaming, add the onions, carrots, celery, and garlic. Sauté until translucent but not browned. Set aside. Cut sausage into diagonal 1/4 inch slices and fry in skillet [OR dice, which I prefer]. Cook until fat is released and meat is browned, about 10 minutes. Lift out pieces and discard the fat. When ham bones are done, remove pot from heat and strain the broth into another vessel to cool slightly. Pick off any meat from the ham bones and chop up finely. Discard fat and bones.

To de-fat the broth: When broth is no longer hot (but warm is okay), carefully pour half of the contents into a gallon ziploc bag (set it in a bowl or tall tupperware for support). Seal the bag and let the fat settle out from the broth to the top. Hold the bag above the liquid, in your intended soup pot with one corner pointing straight down. Take a sharp knife and puncture the bag as close to the tip as possible. Let the broth release into the pot. When the fat layer nears the cut in the bag, pinch it closed with the other hand and discard. Repeat with second bag.

Add the chopped ham meat, cooked beans, vegetables (including tomatoes), and the sausage slices to the broth. Simmer the soup over medium-low heat for 30-45 minutes. Taste for seasoning. Serve hot.