

Jean's Beans, at Home or in Camp

Jean Hoare - Driftwillow Ranch, Stavely, Alberta

Jean doubts if her beans are ever the same twice. She starts with a mixture of dry beans, as many as seven different kinds, adds ham joints, pork hocks, salt pork or bacon ends, then the sauce.

SERVES 6 to 8

1-1/2 cups assorted dried beans

Water to cover beans

1 large onion

8 whole cloves

¼ cup ea molasses, brown sugar, maple syrup

½ cup ketchup or chili sauce

1 tbsp dry mustard

1 tsp salt

1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

½ cup boiling bean water

diced salt pork, bacon ends or leftover baked ham

- Beans may include one or more of the following: small white navy beans, the larger Great Northern beans, pinto, limas, kidney, blackeye, garbanzos or chick peas.
- Put assorted beans into a large heavy pot and cover with water, about three or four times as much water as beans. Let stand overnight. Drain and cover with fresh water. Cover, bring to a boil, then simmer slowly until tender. Test for doneness of beans by blowing on them. If done, the skins will blow off. The small navy bean will take the longest to cook. Do not add meat or other ingredients yet or the beans will not soften. They should boil alone in water until tender.



- When beans are tender, drain reserving the liquid. Stick whole cloves into the onion and add to the cooked beans. Add molasses, brown sugar, maple syrup, ketchup, dry mustard, salt, Worcestershire sauce and half the reserved liquid. Add meat. Cover and bake at 250° F for 6 to 9 hours, adding extra bean water or more ketchup if the mixture becomes dry. Uncover for the last half hour and adjust seasonings, if necessary.
- For camp, prepare the beans up to the final baking stage. Then dig a hole at least 4 inches deeper than the heavy iron bean pot. Prepare enough coals to have a good layer underneath the pot and on top of it. Put the bottom layer of hot coals into the hole, then lower the pot into the hole, covering the lid with foil to keep out any dirt. Cover with remaining coals and bury with at least 3 inches of dirt. Bake in the pit for at least 4 hours, watching that the dirt stays in place, thus holding in the heat.
- A final word about beans. To speed up the soaking process, cover the dried beans with water, bring to a boil and simmer for 2 minutes. Then remove from heat and let stand, tightly covered, for 1 hour. Blanching beans like this is equivalent to about 8 hours soaking.

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