



Hearty Ham and Bean Soup

Introduction

Hearty Ham and Bean Soup is a comforting dish that warms both the body and soul. This classic recipe, often passed down through generations, combines rich flavors and wholesome ingredients that are perfect for chilly evenings or lazy weekends. With tender ham, creamy beans, and a variety of seasonings, this soup not only nourishes but also creates a delightful eating experience. In this article, we will explore the ingredients, preparation steps, cooking techniques, and some helpful notes to ensure your soup turns out perfectly every time.

Detailed Ingredients

Ham

Using leftover ham or a ham hock provides a deep, savory flavor to the

soup. If you prefer, a diced ham steak can be substituted.

Beans

A combination of white beans, such as great northern or cannellini, works best. Canned beans are convenient, but soaking and cooking dried beans from scratch can enhance the soup's flavor.

Onion

A medium onion, diced, adds sweetness and depth to the soup base.

Garlic

Using several minced cloves of garlic will infuse the soup with aromatic goodness.

Carrots

Chopped carrots provide a natural sweetness and a pop of color to the dish.

Celery

Diced celery complements the other vegetables and adds a nice crunch.

Bay Leaves

Two bay leaves contribute a subtle earthiness that enhances the flavor profile.

Thyme

Fresh or dried thyme adds a fragrant herbaceous note to the dish.

Chicken Broth

Using low-sodium chicken broth allows you to control the soup's saltiness while adding a rich, savory base.

Pepper

Freshly cracked black pepper will enhance the overall flavor without

overpowering.

Salt

Adjust the salt to taste, especially if using a sodium-rich broth or ham.

See also Whole Wheat Vanilla Cake

Olive Oil

A tablespoon of olive oil helps to sauté the vegetables, imparting flavor while keeping the soup healthy.

Prep Time

15 minutes

Cook Time, Total Time, Yield

Cook Time: 1 hour

Total Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Yield: Serves 6-8

Detailed Directions and Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Ingredients

Begin by gathering all the ingredients and chopping the vegetables. Dice the onion, carrots, and celery. Mince the garlic and chop the ham into bite-sized pieces.

Step 2: Sauté the Vegetables

In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the diced onion, carrots, and celery. Sauté for 5-7 minutes, until the vegetables begin to

soften.

Step 3: Add Garlic

Stir in the minced garlic and cook for an additional minute, being careful not to let it burn.

Step 4: Incorporate Ham

Add the chopped ham to the pot, stirring to combine. Let it cook for a few minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

Step 5: Add Beans and Seasonings

Next, add the beans (rinsed and drained if canned), bay leaves, thyme, pepper, and salt. Stir well to ensure all the ingredients are evenly distributed.

Step 6: Pour in Chicken Broth

Pour the chicken broth into the pot, increasing the heat to bring the mixture to a boil.

Step 7: Simmer the Soup

Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and cover the pot. Let it simmer for about 45 minutes to 1 hour, stirring occasionally. This allows the flavors to deepen and the beans to become tender.

Step 8: Adjust Seasonings

After cooking, taste the soup and adjust the seasoning if necessary. Add more salt, pepper, or thyme according to your preference.

See also Water Chestnut Chicken and Rice Casserole

Step 9: Remove Bay Leaves

Before serving, remember to remove the bay leaves from the pot.

Step 10: Serve Hot

Ladle the hearty ham and bean soup into bowls and serve hot. Enjoy with crusty bread or a simple salad for a complete meal.

Notes

Ingredient Substitutions

Feel free to customize the soup with other ingredients. Kale, spinach, or potatoes can be great additions, while vegetable broth can make the soup vegetarian. Adjust based on dietary preferences.

Storage Recommendations

Store leftover soup in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. It also freezes well, making it a perfect make-ahead meal.

Reheating Instructions

To reheat, simply thaw if frozen and heat on the stove over medium heat until warmed through. You may need to add a splash of broth or water to adjust the consistency.

Cook Techniques

Sautéing

Sautéing the vegetables before adding the broth develops their flavors and ensures they are tender.

Simmering

Simmering the soup helps meld and deepen the flavors over time, allowing the beans to absorb the delicious broth.

FAQ

Can I use dried beans instead of canned?

Yes, you can use dried beans. Be sure to soak them overnight and adjust cooking times accordingly, as dried beans take longer to cook than canned.

What type of ham works best for this recipe?

Any type of cooked ham will work, including leftover holiday ham, ham steak, or a ham bone for added flavor.

Is this soup gluten-free?

Yes, the ingredients listed make this soup gluten-free. Always check the broth label to ensure it meets gluten-free standards.

See also Iced coffee

Can I make this soup in a slow cooker?

Absolutely! You can adapt the recipe for a slow cooker by sautéing the vegetables first, then adding them to the slow cooker along with the remaining ingredients. Cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 3-4 hours.

How can I thicken the soup?

If you prefer a thicker soup, you can mash some of the beans against

the side of the pot or add a cornstarch slurry towards the end of cooking.

Conclusion

Hearty Ham and Bean Soup is a versatile and nourishing dish that is sure to please everyone at the table. With its blend of rich ham, creamy beans, and savory vegetables, it embodies comfort food at its best. Whether you're looking for a simple weeknight dinner or a dish to serve at gatherings, this soup is a fantastic choice that is easy to prepare and full of flavor.

More Recipes Suggestions and Combination

Cheesy Breadsticks

Pair your hearty soup with homemade cheesy breadsticks for a delightful dipping experience.

Garden Salad

A fresh garden salad with a light vinaigrette balances the richness of the soup, providing a refreshing contrast.

Cornbread Muffins

Serve warm cornbread muffins alongside the soup for a classic comfort food combination that complements the flavors.

Grilled Cheese Sandwiches

For a nostalgic pairing, serve slices of gooey grilled cheese sandwiches

for a filling and satisfying meal.

Vegetable Stir-fry

Add a vegetable stir-fry for a lighter side, contributing a range of textures and colors that enhance your meal.