

HEARTY TUSCAN BEAN STEW

Serves 8.

INGREDIENTS

- Table salt
- 1 pound dried cannellini beans (about 2 cups), rinsed and picked over
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil , plus extra for drizzling
- 6 ounces pancetta , cut into 1/4-inch pieces (see note)
- 1 large onion , chopped medium (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 2 medium celery ribs , cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 3/4 cup)
- 2 medium carrots , peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 1 cup)
- 8 medium garlic cloves , peeled and crushed
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 3 cups water
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 bunch kale or collard greens (about 1 pound), stems trimmed and leaves chopped into 1-inch pieces (about 8 cups loosely packed)
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes , drained and rinsed
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- Ground black pepper
- 8 slices country white bread , each 1 1/4 inches thick, broiled until golden brown on both sides and rubbed with garlic clove (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Dissolve 3 tablespoons salt in 4 quarts cold water in large bowl or container. Add beans and soak at room temperature for at least 8 hours and up to 24 hours. Drain and rinse well.

2. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 250 degrees. Heat oil and pancetta in large Dutch oven over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until pancetta is lightly browned and fat has rendered, 6 to 10 minutes. Add onion, celery, and carrots. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are softened and lightly browned, 10 to 16 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in broth, water, bay leaves, and soaked beans. Increase heat to high and bring to simmer. Cover pot, transfer to oven, and cook until beans are almost tender (very center of beans will still be firm), 45 minutes to 1 hour.

3. Remove pot from oven and stir in greens and tomatoes. Cover pot, return to oven, and continue to cook until beans and greens are fully tender, 30 to 40 minutes longer.

4. Remove pot from oven and submerge rosemary sprig in stew. Cover and let stand 15 minutes. Discard bay leaves and rosemary sprig and season stew with salt and pepper to taste. If desired, use back of spoon to press some beans against side of pot to thicken stew. Serve over toasted bread, if desired, and drizzle with olive oil.

RECIPE TESTING

Simmer Down

The bubbling action of stew simmered on the stovetop caused our beans to fall apart. Cooking the beans at a near-simmer in a covered pot in a 250-degree oven kept them intact.



Simmered on stovetop



Near-simmered in oven

STEP-BY-STEP

Keys to Tender, Flavorful Beans



SALTWATER SOAK

Soaking the beans in salt water overnight helps them cook up creamy, with tender skins.



2. LOW-TEMPERATURE OVEN

Cooking the beans at a near-simmer in a 250-degree oven leads to fewer exploded beans in the finished stew.



3. WAIT TO ADD TOMATOES

The acid in tomatoes can interfere with the beans' tender texture. Add them toward the end of cooking, after the beans have already softened.

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