

Asturian White Bean Soup

Large white beans are popular in Asturia, Spain, a northern region with an extensive coastline along the Bay of Biscay. They use local faba white beans, (the best beans are hand selected) but if you can't find them easily, you can opt for large white kidney beans, lima beans, or cannellini beans. The region is known for its cold, wet climate, making a hearty soup heart-warming. It has been beautiful sailing in and out of multiple scenic ports along this amazingly rugged coastline.

You could use pre-cooked canned or jarred beans, but I find them always a bit overcooked, lacking the proper texture and flavor. Ideally, you would soak them overnight, rinse them in the morning, and cook them the following day, details below.

Traditionally, the people of this region use bacon or pork sausage (chorizo) in their soup, but my personal preference is to skip it. If you do use pork products, be sure to buy organic and pasture raised, with about 1 pound of spicy sausage and 4 strips of sliced bacon for this recipe.

Bean Soaking Time: 10-12 hours

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Simmering Time: 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours (depends upon the type of bean you choose)

Express Version: You can make the express version with pre-cooked beans start to finish in 30 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients:

2 ½ cups large dried white beans (soaked in water for 10-12 hours) *(For the express version, you will use six cups of cooked beans, rinsed and drained (or four 15-ounce cans)*

2 medium white onions, chopped

4 tablespoons extra virgin Spanish olive oil

½ teaspoon sea salt

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

2 medium carrots, chopped

1 green bell pepper, chopped

2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon ground paprika

1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper (optional)

1 teaspoon dried thyme

8 medium garlic cloves, chopped

½ cup parsley, chopped

2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth

4 cups water

Directions:

In a large bowl, add enough water until beans have an extra 2 inches (5 cm) of water covering them, add more water to keep covered as needed. Soak overnight (preferably 10-12 hours), drain in the morning, and refrigerate until ready to cook.

Heat a large pot over medium heat, add oil, then onions, salt, and black pepper, and sauté stirring occasionally for 2-3 minutes, until onions soften, then add carrots, green pepper, bay leaves, vinegar, paprika and thyme, and heat another 3-4 minutes with an occasional stir. Add garlic and parsley and heat another 1-2 minutes.

Add pre-soaked beans, broth, and water, bring to a gentle boil, then simmer on low heat for 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours, until beans have softened, but are still slightly al dente. Discard bay leaves and serve. *(If you are making the express version, add pre-cooked beans, bring to a boil, simmer for 10 minutes, and serve.)*

Enjoy!

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