

## **snow cap bean and ham soup**

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10 servings

- 1 pound dried Snow Cap Beans, picked over for stones and debris and well-rinsed (navy or northern beans will work, too)
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 stalks celery and leaves, chopped
- 4 large carrots, scrubbed, trimmed, and chopped (no need to peel)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Large handful of chopped parsley
- Kosher Salt and Fresh-Ground pepper
- Ham bone with some meat left on it
- 4-5 quarts water
- 1 quart (4 cups/32 ounces) Chicken Stock
- Bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon dried Bouquet Garni or a mixture of dried thyme and minced or crumbled dried rosemary
- 4-6 Shakes hot sauce (I like Tabasco brand)
- 1 cup Salsa, for garnish — optional

1. In a large pot, place cleaned beans; cover with water plus two inches. \* Bring to a boil and boil for two minutes. Cover and turn off the heat; let the pot stand for an hour or two. Drain beans.

2. Add butter, oil, onions, celery, carrots, parsley, and 1/2 teaspoon salt with 1/2 teaspoon pepper to the pot and cook over medium heat, stirring, for 10 minutes or until vegetables are softening. Trim most of the meat from the ham bone and chop the meat. Add the bone along with the chopped ham to the pot with four quarts of water and the chicken stock. Stir in the drained beans, herbs, the hot sauce, and another teaspoon of salt. Turn flame under pot to high. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to simmer and cook until beans are tender — 2 1/2 – 3 hours at altitude– less at or nearer sea level. Stir regularly to ensure even cooking. Add more water if the soup becomes too thick; it should be very loose and brothy.

3. Remove ham bone and any other pieces of bone, fat, or gristle that may have cooked loose. If there's any usable meat left on the bone, remove, chop, and add to the soup. Discard ham bone. Taste and adjust seasonings if needed. Serve hot garnished with a spoonful of salsa, if desired. The person who gets the bay leaf has good luck until the next pot of soup is made.

## COOK'S NOTES:

**\*Alternately, you can let the beans soak all night.** I always forget to do this and sometimes just cook them as they are with no soaking or boiling at all. They do cook better and supposedly have less gas-producing possibilities if they're soaked or boiled before cooking.

**This soup is a pretty traditional bean soup.** Change it up by adding a chopped fennel bulb or a can of chopped tomatoes. Some spicy sausage sautéed with the vegetables would be luscious. A couple of diced small red potatoes thrown in for the last half an hour of cooking would add additional texture. If you've a parsnip or turnip, switch out a carrot or two for them. Like things hotter? Throw in a 1/2 teaspoon of crushed red pepper with the onions and celery. A cup or two of fresh greens –chopped kale, beet greens, or spinach, for instance — cooked in the soup for only a 3-4 minutes at the end would be beautiful color and nutrition-wise. Chopped red or yellow pepper as a garnish could provide some fresh crunch. *Be flexible* and use what's in your crisper or on your counter.

**If you like thicker bean soups,** puree a few cups of this soup (carefully — it's hot) after it's finished cooking and return the pureed portion to the pot and stir well. You may need to readjust the seasonings again.

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