

BLACK BEAN SOUP

SERVES 6

To make this soup vegetarian, omit the bacon and substitute vegetable broth for the chicken broth. The canned beans and commercial chicken broth are the primary sources of sodium in this recipe; if you are concerned about sodium intake, substitute low-sodium or salt-free canned beans and our All-Purpose Chicken Broth (see page 95). Serve with lowfat sour cream, cilantro, and lime wedges.

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 ounces bacon (about 2 slices), minced
- 2 onions, minced
- 3 celery ribs, chopped fine
- 1 carrot, peeled and cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 4½ teaspoons ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 4 (15-ounce) cans black beans, rinsed
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- Salt and pepper

1. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add the bacon and cook until rendered and crisp, about 3 minutes. Stir in the onions, celery, and carrot and cook until the vegetables are soft, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Stir in the garlic, cumin, and red pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in the beans and chicken broth, bring to a simmer, and cook until the beans are very tender and the broth is flavorful, about 30 minutes.

3. Puree 1½ cups of the beans and 2 cups of the broth in a blender until smooth, then return it to the pot. Stir in the lime juice, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

PER 1½-CUP SERVING: Cal 270; Fat 9g; Sat Fat 1.5g; Chol 5mg; Carb 34g; Protein 13g; Fiber 13g; Sodium 1270mg

To Make Ahead

The soup can be cooled and refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days or frozen for up to 1 month. Thaw (if frozen) and reheat over low heat (do not boil).

Test Kitchen Tip: MINCE THE BACON

Minced bacon releases its flavorful fat more easily than chopped bacon ensuring that a little bacon gives our soup big smoky flavor.

LENTIL SOUP

SERVES 5

We prefer the flavor and texture of French green lentils (lentilles du Puy) in this soup; however, common brown lentils work fine. To make this soup vegetarian, omit the bacon and substitute vegetable broth for the chicken broth.

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 ounces bacon (about 2 slices), minced
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
- 2 onions, minced
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme or ¼ teaspoon dried
- 1¼ cups lentils, rinsed and picked through (see note above)
- ¾ cup white wine
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1½ cups water
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper

1. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add the bacon and cook until rendered and crisp, about 3 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes, onions, carrots, garlic, bay leaf, and thyme and cook until the vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes.

2. Stir in the lentils and cook until the vegetables are softened and the lentils have become darker, 8 to 10 minutes.

3. Stir in the wine, scraping up any browned bits, and simmer until nearly evaporated, about 3 minutes. Stir in the broth and water and bring to a simmer. Partially cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until the lentils are tender but still hold their shape, 30 to 35 minutes.

Test Kitchen Tip: MAINTAIN YOUR SHAPE

While the smaller French green lentils (also known as lentilles du puy) are preferred in this soup over the larger brown lentils because they hold their shape better, they too can begin to fall apart and lead to a mushy soup. We discovered the trick to keeping these lentils intact. Cooking the lentils in the presence of salt and acid (from the canned tomatoes) helps to harden the exterior of the lentils, preventing them from breaking down. The result? Lentils that maintain their shape and are perfectly tender inside.

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