

LOADED PINTO BEANS

Serves 8-10 generously, plus more for leftovers

Now, pre-internet, there was a debate among cooks (and their cookbooks) about when to salt dried beans during the cooking process. Should we salt them during their soak? During cooking? After cooking? So many strong opinions. What a confusion. Now that the internet has made connecting with great cooks a daily possibility--and after a lot of personal experience in the kitchen--I can confidently recommend this delicious bean recipe, which is graciously inspired from the kitchen of my friend (and great cook) Dacy. And, by the way, add salt only after the soak and during the cooking process.

The Ingredients

5 cups (2 lbs.) dry pinto beans
10-12 cups water
1 tablespoon coarse Kosher Salt
1 large yellow onion chopped into ¼-inch dice
1 bulb fresh garlic minced (6-8 cloves) or 1 tablespoon garlic powder
2 tablespoons chili powder
2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 ½ tablespoons granulated sugar (optional)
4-5 bay leaves
1 (4 ounce) can Fire-Roasted Diced Green Chilis
2 teaspoons coarse kosher salt
1 teaspoon fresh black pepper

The Method

1. Place dried beans in a colander, sort for any debris, and rinse under warm water thoroughly. Put the beans in a crock pot and add the water and Kosher salt. Cook on high for 6-8 hours or on low 8-10 hours. Check about halfway through; if the water goes below the beans add just enough water to keep them barely covered.
2. In the last two hours of cooking, add the rest of the ingredients.
3. Serve hot and load it up! When finished, you can eat them almost like soup served alongside white or brown rice. Simply put some rice (like my Cilantro Lime Rice) in a bowl, ladle the beans generously over the rice, and add any delicious toppings which may include:

Shredded Iceberg lettuce
Chopped green or white onions
Sliced radishes
Diced avocado
Fresh tomatoes, diced and/or Salsa
Grated cheddar cheese
A dollop of sour cream
Cilantro-Lime Crema
A lime wedge
Chopped cilantro
Tortilla chips, corn chips, or quesadillas

Tips

- Store any leftovers in the refrigerator in an airtight container for up to 5 days.
- This recipe works perfectly using dried black beans, too, which also doubles as a delicious soup.
- As the beans cool, they will thicken. To use up any leftovers, mash some of the beans to make a thicker consistency, spoon some onto a flour tortilla, add shredded cheddar cheese and roll it all up snug-like for burritos. Individually wrap each burrito in aluminum foil and you have an easy meal for the next day or two--all ready to warm in the oven and serve.
- These are killer on nachos. Layer them on tortilla chips along with Dutch Oven Pulled Pork, All-American Queso, and the toppings listed above for a pre-game appetizer, an easy Friday night dinner with the family & a movie, or “teen-dream” late-night snack. Yes, that’s another story; bottom line is, these are versatile, hearty, and unmistakably delicious. Add this recipe to your “go-to’s” as a no-fail favorite.

