

The Lunch Box: White Bean Soup with Garlic and Sausage

This recipe is adapted from Peter Miller's Lunch at the Shop, a book that encourages you to share lunch with your coworkers. It can easily be doubled for larger groups: The leftovers, if there are any, are probably the best part.

SERVES 4

AT HOME

- ¼ cup (60 milliliters) plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 mild Italian sausages, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups (390 grams) dried cannellini beans, cooked and drained (see below)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup (240 milliliters) chicken stock
- ½ cup (10 grams) fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped

AT THE SHOP

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

COOKED BEANS

- 2 cups (390 grams) dried beans, soaked overnight
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 celery stalk
- ½ onion
- Salt

AT HOME

Heat a sauté pan over medium heat, then add 1 tablespoon of oil and heat for 1 minute. Add the sausages and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, turning them while they brown, adjusting the heat as needed. Remove them from the pan and set aside on paper towels to drain.

In a soup pot, heat the remaining ¼ cup (60 milliliters) of the oil. Add the garlic over medium heat. The temperature must be high enough to lightly cook the garlic but not so high that the garlic browns. Cook until aromatic, stirring occasionally, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the beans, stirring them into the oil and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, and cover the pan. Cook the beans, covered, for 3 minutes to infuse the flavors, and then stir in ½ cup (120 milliliters) of the stock.

Using a slotted spoon, remove about one-third of the beans and process them through a ricer or food mill back into the pan. (You can alternatively squish the beans through a slotted spoon or mash them in a bowl.) This will thicken the soup. Stir in the remaining ½ cup (120 milliliters) stock, keeping the mixture simmering. (You might need to add a little warm water if the soup's too thick.) Add the sausage and parsley, and stir to combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

AT THE SHOP

Before reheating, add 2 tablespoons of warm water, then stir the soup to combine everything evenly. Drizzle the top with a thin line of the oil just before serving.

COOKED BEANS

Rinse the beans, picking through and tossing any broken pieces away. Put them in a saucepan with 6 cups (1 ½ liters) of cold water, and add more if needed to cover the beans. Add the bay leaf, garlic, thyme, celery and onion: There's no need to chop them, so toss them in whole. (Don't add the salt until after they're cooked.)

Bring the water to a slow boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, and then adjust the heat to maintain a low simmer. Leave the pot uncovered, and skim away the foam that collects on the surface. Add more water as needed to keep the beans covered as they cook.

The beans should be done in 45 to 60 minutes, but the many variations in bean size and age will affect cooking time, and some can take up to 2 hours to cook. Taste them every 10 minutes or so after 45 minutes. The beans should be tender but not mushy. Add salt once the beans are tender, and discard the herbs, garlic, celery and onion.

Refrigerate the beans in their cooking liquid in an airtight container if they're not being used right away. They'll keep for up to a week. Drain before using.

