



# In the Kitchen

with Barb Agee - January 2017

## The Best Beans

The humble bean is an inexpensive, filling and nutritious cure for winter blues. The perfectly cooked bean is brilliant at absorbing the flavors of herbs, spices, vegetables and meats. Cuisines from all over the world use beans in recipes from appetizers to desserts.

### White Bean-White Chocolate Blondies

1¾ cups cooked cannellini beans or one 14 ounce can cannellini, rinsed and drained	2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1½ cups (7 ounces) white chocolate, melted	1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons butter	2 teaspoons baking powder
3 large eggs	½ teaspoon baking soda
¾ cups granulated sugar	½ white chocolate chips
1 tablespoon white Karo syrup	¾ cup toasted hazelnuts, coarsely chopped

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place the beans in a food processor; pulse a few times until ground into a crumbly paste. Add the butter; then the eggs to the processor, one egg at a time, pulsing after each addition. Add the melted chocolate in three additions, pulsing after each addition. Add the sugar, Karo syrup and vanilla; pulse 3 to 4 times. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and baking soda. Add the flour mixture to the processor and blend together.

Spray a 10-inch square pan or a 9 x 11-inch pan with vegetable spray. Pour the mixture into the pan; level with a spatula. Bake for 20 minutes or until top is crisp and blondies are starting to pull away from the edges of the pan. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with the white chocolate chips and return to the oven for 1 minutes. Remove from the oven and spread the warm chips over the blondies. Sprinkle the top with the hazelnuts. Cool completely before cutting into 24 squares.

### Mixed Bean, Sprouts and Orange Salad

2 teaspoon sweet chili sauce	2 navel oranges or blood oranges
2 tablespoons fresh orange juice	2 celery stalks, very thinly sliced diagonally
1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar	2 green onions, very thinly sliced diagonally
¼ cup olive oil	4 cups of mixed baby arugula and baby spinach
Salt and pepper to taste	½ cup sprouts (such as alfalfa, radish, or broccoli)
2 cups cooked, cooled mixed beans	¼ cup cilantro leaves

With a sharp knife, remove peel and white pith from the oranges. Cut oranges crosswise into ¼-inch thick rounds. Cut each round into fourths. Put orange sections into a sieve over a bowl to collect the juices. In a medium bowl, whisk together sweet chili sauce, orange juice and balsamic vinegar. Slowly whisk in the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

In a large bowl toss together beans, celery, green onions and greens. Drizzle with enough dressing to lightly coat the greens. Divide the salad mixture on 6 salad plates. Top the greens with the orange sections; sprinkle the sprouts and cilantro leaves on top of each salad. Pour dressing into a serving dish and pass with the salads.

## Farmer's French Bean Soup

1¼ cups dried flageolets or baby lima beans, reserve liquid  
1 large clove garlic  
1 bay leaf  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
¼ pound bacon, sliced thinly  
2 leeks, cut in half and thinly sliced white parts only  
1 shallot, peeled and cut into very small dice  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
4 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

1 tablespoon tomato paste  
2 carrots, peeled, cut into ¼-inch half rounds  
2 small parsnips, peeled, cut into ½-inch cubes  
1 stalk celery, thinly sliced  
5 cups chicken stock  
1 cup reserved bean cooking liquid  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 teaspoons white wine vinegar

Sort through beans, discarding any little stones or clumps of dirt, and then give them a quick rinse. Transfer to a large bowl; add enough cold water to cover the beans by 3-inches for 4 to 12 hours in the refrigerator. Transfer beans and soaking water to a soup pot. Add additional water to cover beans by 3-inches. Add 1 large garlic smashed and 1 bay leaf. Bring beans to a boil over medium-high heat. Boil for 10 minutes with the lid ajar. Reduce heat and continue to simmer until beans are tender but not mushy. Add salt to taste. Let stand for the beans to absorb the salt and some of the liquid. Drain the beans and save the liquid separately.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a soup pot over medium heat, add bacon. Cook, stirring often, until the fat is rendered and the bacon begins to brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Pour the bacon into a small strainer set over a bowl, set bacon aside. Spoon 2 tablespoons of the fat back into the pot and return it to medium heat. Add the leeks and shallot to the pot; season with a pinch of kosher salt and a couple turns of pepper. Cook, stirring frequently, until they begin to soften but not brown, 4 to 6 minutes.

Add the thyme and cook until frequent, 1 minute. Add the carrots, parsnips and celery; add 2 cups of broth, partially cover and simmer until the vegetables are just barely tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Add beans, 3 cups of stock and 1 cup of the reserved bean-cooling liquid. Return the bacon to the stockpot. Stir to combine and simmer partially covered for 20 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add white wine vinegar to soup. *Yields 10 cups*

## Sirloin Steak and Beer-Braised Beans

½ pounds dried pinto beans or small red beans, cooked  
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
1 pound butternut squash  
1 medium onion, sliced into ¼-inch slices  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
½ teaspoon dried thyme  
6 slices bacon, sliced thinly

1 teaspoon butter  
3 cloves garlic  
1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, chopped  
½ cup beer, such as amber ale  
½ cup beef stock  
1½ pounds beef sirloin tips  
¾ cup beef stock

Preheat oven to 500°F. Peel, seed and cut butternut squash into 1½-inch cubes.

Rub 1 tablespoon of olive oil over meat. Combine 1½ teaspoons salt, ½ teaspoon pepper and thyme. Rub 1 teaspoon salt mixture over meat. In a bowl, mix 1 tablespoon olive oil and remaining salt mixture together. In a bowl toss squash cubes and onion slices the olive oil mixture. Place meat and vegetables on a baking sheet. Roast for 10 minutes, turning once.

Meanwhile, in a Dutch oven cook bacon in butter until crisp. Add meat, squash, onion, drained beans, garlic, rosemary, ale and beef stock. Reduce oven to 300°F. Bake 20 to 30 minutes until meat is done (140°F). Remove meat and slice. Serve meat with beans and vegetables. *Makes 6 servings*

