

Cassoulet

Serves 6-8

Ingredients:

1 lb.	Dried white beans (Flageolet)
8 1/4 cups	cold water
3 fresh	thyme sprigs
1 fresh	Rosemary sprig
1 each	bay leaf
4 each	cloves
1/4 teaspoon	black pepper corns
2 tablespoons	olive oil
4 oz.	Bacon, diced
2 cups	chopped onion (3/4 lb.)
1 cup	celery, diced
1 cup	carrot, peeled diced
3 tsp	finely chopped garlic (6 large cloves)
1 (14-oz) can	stewed tomatoes, chopped with juice
2 cups	beef broth
1 tablespoon	tomato paste
4 each	confit duck legs* (1 3/4 lb. total)
1 lb.	garlic pork sausage
1/2 cup	Parsley, chopped (stems reserved)
2 cups	coarse fresh bread crumbs
1 1/2 tsp	salt
1/2 tsp	black pepper

Special equipment: an 8-inch square of cheesecloth; kitchen string; a 4 1/2- to 5-quart casserole dish (3 to 4 inches deep)

Preparation

Soak and cook beans:

Cover beans with cold water by 2 inches in a large bowl and soak 8 to 12 hours. Drain in a colander. Transfer beans to a 6- to 8-quart pot and bring to a boil with 8 cups cold water. Put thyme, bay leaf, cloves, parsley sprigs, and peppercorns in cheesecloth and tie into a bundle with string to make a bouquet garni. Add

bouquet garni to beans, and then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until beans are tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Let cool and drain.

Cassoulet

In large pot brown bacon in olive oil, add onion, carrot and celery, stirring until translucent. Add garlic, tomatoes, paste and broth. Add beans and additional water as needed to cover. Add sausage and duck confit*. Simmer, covered, over low heat for at least one hour or place into 350 oven for 1 hour.

Remove bouquet garni and discard.

With tongs remove duck confit, pull remaining meat off of bones and discard.

Remove the sausage. Slice into ½ inch pieces and return to pot.

Stir in remaining teaspoon salt and pepper, add half of chopped parsley.

Combine remaining parsley with bread crumbs.

Assemble casserole:

Ladle Cassoulet into casserole dish, distributing meat and beans evenly. (Meat and beans should be level with liquid; if they are submerged, ladle excess liquid back into pot and boil until reduced, then pour back into casserole dish.) Spread bread crumb topping evenly over Cassoulet and bake, uncovered, in lower third of oven, until bubbling and crust is golden, about 1 hour.

Serve with a good French bread and country wine like Cahors, Madiran or Cotes du Rhone.