

Enjoy This Recipe Courtesy of Chef Les Kincaid

Cuban Black Bean Soup

1 pound dried black (turtle) beans
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 medium white onions, chopped (about 1 1/2 cups)
2 large red sweet peppers, chopped
3 ribs celery, chopped
3 tablespoons chili powder
3 tablespoons ground cumin
2 tablespoons finely chopped garlic
1/4 cup tomato paste
4 quarts cold water
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/4 cup dry (not cooking) sherry

Garnish:

Sour cream
Chopped scallions or chives

Sort the beans carefully to remove any dirt and debris. Rinse the beans in cold water and then soak them overnight covered with more, clean, fresh cold water and place in the refrigerator. Drain any excess water before adding the beans to the soup pot.

In a large soup pot with a heavy bottom, heat the olive oil. Add the onions, peppers, celery, chili powder, and cumin, and sauté over medium heat until the vegetable wilt. Add the garlic and tomato paste and cook an additional 3 minutes, stirring to make sure you don't burn the tomato or garlic. Add the water and bring to a boil.

Add the black beans, return to a boil, then lower to a simmer and cook for 2 to 2 1/2 hours, or until the beans are tender.

Remove from the heat, season with salt and pepper to taste, and allow cooling for half an hour before pureeing in small batches in a blender or food processor.

If you are serving immediately, return the soup to a boil and add 1/4-cup dry sherry. Cook 2 minutes more. Ladle into bowls and garnish each with a tablespoon of sour cream and a sprinkling of scallions or chives. If you are preparing the soup ahead of time, cool thoroughly after blending, transfer to a container with a tightly fitting lid, and store in the refrigerator for up to a week. Add the sherry after reheating the soup to serve.

Yield: 6 to 8/ 8-ounce portions