

White Beans N Ham

Dried beans with cornbread was a common meal at our house when I was growing up. My Dad was a wiz at bean cooking while mom baked the best cornbread I've ever tasted. In all my married years – I've never tried cooking dried beans. You see, I have a deep fear of pressure cookers – which was often used to cook dried beans at our house. Many Sunday mornings my family would attend the local church in the country with Grandmother and Granddaddy and return to her house for one of her “Sunday Dinners.”



One Sunday morning before church, Grandmother put a roast in a pressure cooker to simmer during the sermon. We had no idea we would all have a visual aid to reinforce the preacher's “hell, fire and brimstone” sermon when we returned to Grandmother's house following morning worship. The smell of scorched beef met us at the door as clouds of thick smoke billowed through the house. At some point during that fiery sermon, the pressure cooker exploded, hurling burnt beef in all directions – and Sunday dinner stuck to Grandmother's ceiling over her stove.

Here's a safer way to cook dried beans – and it doesn't even involve the typical soaking method. This meal is a low budget people pleaser totaling about \$5!

- 4 Tablespoons Butter
- 4 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- 1 sweet onion finely chopped
- 3-4 cloves garlic – minced
- 2 cups dried white or navy beans - rinsed
- 4 cups chicken stock (or more if you prefer a thin soup for the beans)
- 4 cups water
- 2 cups diced country ham
- Black or white pepper to taste

Heat butter and oil over medium heat in large pot or Dutch oven. Add chopped onions and minced garlic and sauté, stirring constantly for a couple of minutes. Then add the rinsed white or navy beans to the onions and garlic. Stir and cook over medium heat another minute. Add chicken stock and water. Bring to a rolling boil, and then reduce heat to a low simmer. Let beans simmer for one hour then add the ham pieces. Continue to let beans and ham simmer for at least another hour or until beans are tender. Additional chicken stock or water can be added to the beans if a thin soup is preferred. Season with white or black pepper to taste.