

The beans of choice in Caribbean and Latin American cooking are the black or turtle variety.

Prep time: 45 minutes plus soaking

Cooking time: 1 1/2 to 2 hours

Degree of difficulty: Easy

Low-fat

1 pound dried black beans  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
2 cups chopped onions  
1 cup chopped carrots  
1 cup chopped celery  
1 tablespoon minced garlic  
2 teaspoons cumin  
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes  
2 cans (14 1/2 oz. each) chicken broth  
4 cups water  
1/2 bay leaf  
1/4 teaspoon thyme  
1 pound smoked ham hocks  
1 can (14 or 16 oz.) whole tomatoes, chopped  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
Lemon slices, for garnish

1. Soak beans in water to cover by 2 inches overnight. (To quick-soak: Place beans with water to cover by 2 inches in large saucepan and bring to boil; boil 2 minutes. Cover and let stand 1 hour.) Drain.

2. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onions, carrots and celery; cook, stirring occasionally, until tender. Add garlic, cumin and red pepper; cook 30 seconds. Stir in beans, broth, water, bay leaf, thyme and ham hocks. Bring to boil; reduce heat, cover and simmer 30 minutes. Stir in undrained tomatoes and salt; simmer, covered, until beans are very tender, 1 to 1 1/2 hours more.

3. Remove ham hock. Cut meat from bone. Discard skin and bone and bay leaf and return meat to soup. With potato masher, mash soup to thicken. Serve with lemon slices, if desired. Makes 12 cups.

PER CUP

Calories 195

Total Fat 4 g

Saturated Fat 1 g

Cholesterol 7 mg

Sodium 853 mg

Carbohydrates 30 g