

HAM HOCK AND WHITE BEAN SOUP

1 SMOKED HAM HOCK CUT BY YOUR BUTCHER INTO 4 PIECES
1 CUP OF DRIED CANNELLINI BEANS
RIND FROM A WEDGE OF PARMESAN CHEESE
BOUQUET GARNIE (PARSLEY STEMS, BAY LEAF, SPRIG OF THYME)
3 CARROTS
1 LARGE BROWN ONION
4 CLOVES OF GARLIC
1 LARGE LEEK
FRESH CHIVES

PRE-HEAT OVEN TO 300°

PUT THE BEANS AND THE HAM HOCK IN A LARGE DUTCH OVEN. COVER WITH COLD WATER BY 2 INCHES. BRING TO A BOIL. TURN OFF THE HEAT, COVER AND LET IT SIT FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR.

DRAIN THE BEANS AND THE HAM HOCK IN A COLANDER SET OVER A BOWL TO CATCH THE LIQUID. RINSE BEANS AND HAM HOCK UNDER COLD RUNNING WATER. DISCARD ANY DISCOLORED OR MISHAPEN BEANS.

RETURN BEANS AND HAM HOCK TO THE POT. ADD THE PARMESAN RINDS. POUR THE BEAN WATER BACK IN AND ENOUGH WATER TO COME AN INCH OR TWO FROM THE TOP.

BRING TO A BOIL, REDUCE TO A SIMMER. ADD THE BOUQUET GARNIE AND THE 4 CLOVES OF PEELED GARLIC. PLACE IN THE OVEN, PARTIALLY COVERED.

COOK FOR ABOUT 1 ½ HOURS OR UNTIL THE BEANS ARE TENDER AND THE MEAT IS FALLING OFF THE BONES. (COOKING TIME WILL VARY DEPENDING ON THE CONDITION OF THE BEANS.) IF THE BEANS ARE COOKED BEFORE THE HAM HOCK, SCOOP THEM OUT WITH A SLOTTED SPOON AND SET ASIDE.

REMOVE THE HAM HOCK WHEN IT'S DONE. ALLOW TO COOL, THEN TAKE THE MEAT OFF THE BONES.

MEANWHILE, PEEL AND DICE THE CARROTS AND THE ONION. TRIM THE LEEK, LEAVING ONLY THE WHITE PART, SLICE LENGTHWISE, RINSE UNDER RUNNING WATER AND DICE.

MELT 1 TBSP OF BUTTER IN 1 TBSP OF OLIVE OIL IN A SAUCEPAN. ADD THE CARROTS AND THE ONIONS. COVER AND SWEAT ON A LOW FLAME. WHEN THE ONIONS ARE TRANSLUCENT, ADD THE DICED LEEKS AND COOK A MINUTE MORE, STIRRING TO KEEP THEM FROM BROWNING.

PUT THE DUTCH OVEN ON THE STOVE OVER A LOW FLAME. STIR IN THE VEGETABLES AND THE PIECES OF HAM HOCK. GARNISH WITH CHOPPED CHIVES OR YOUR HERBS OF CHOICE.

SERVES 8