



100% Grass Fed Beef and Natural Vegetables
Yoder, WY
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Wild West Cassoulet

Some people say that a cassoulet can only be made with very specific ingredients and in a very particular manner (including the shape and style of pan). If this is you, please skip this recipe! However, if you, like me, believe that recipes are merely canvases for further creativity - even one as traditional as cassoulet - you may very well enjoy this not-so-traditional version of a very fine, rich country French stew.

Our most blatant disregard for the original cassoulet recipe is the absence of preserved duck. We use bacon instead, which supplies the fat needed for the cassoulet. We use beef cuts and our all-beef German sausage as our meats, but you may use other slow-cooking cuts, including stewing chicken and lamb. Choose at least two meats in addition to the bacon.

Start this recipe a day ahead by soaking the beans overnight.

On cooking day, plan 30-40 minutes preparation, plus 2.5-3 hours baking time.

Ingredients

1 lb. dry navy beans or other good soup bean
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
4 slices thick-cut bacon
1.5-2 lb. grassfed beef chuck, beef cheek**, stew, or round, cut into bite-size pieces
1 lg. onion, finely chopped
3 lg. garlic cloves, sliced
1/2 cup white wine
2 cups beef or chicken stock

1/4 cup lemon juice
1 tsp. thyme
bay leaf
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
black pepper, freshly ground
1 cup tomato juice
1 lb. Meadow Maid Foods German sausage, cut into slices

1 cup bread crumbs
2 Tbsp. butter
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 Tbsp. finely chopped parsley

Directions

Place beans in a stainless or glass bowl and cover with warm water. Add 2 Tbsp. lemon juice and leave in a warm place overnight, up to 24 hours.

In a Dutch oven casserole*, cook bacon until soft, not crispy. Remove bacon from pan, but leave fat in the pan. If necessary, additional fat, oil, or butter may be added to the pan while browning or sautéing. Brown the meats, other than the sausage, in small batches, being sure that the pieces are richly brown on all sides. Remove meat, leaving fat in pan. Sauté onion and garlic. Add wine, stock and soaked beans (drained), plus water to cover. Bring to a boil and skim foam that rises. Meanwhile, chop bacon into bite-size pieces.

Add 1/4 cup lemon juice, thyme, bay leaf, ground cloves, pepper, tomato juice, bacon, browned meats, and sliced German sausage to pan. Mix thoroughly. Cover pan, and place in oven at 250°F for a gentle simmer. Cook until beans are tender, about 2 hours.

When beans are tender, sauté bread crumbs in 2 Tbsp. butter. Mix parsley and Parmesan cheese into crumbs. Take cassoulet from oven, and remove bay leaf. Taste for salt and adjust seasoning if necessary. Sprinkle bread crumbs over top. Return to oven, uncovered, for about 20 minutes at 350°F.

Serve with a hearty red table wine, crusty bread, and a substantial green salad. Bon appétit, or perhaps I should say, "chow down, pardner!"

*If you do not have a Dutch oven casserole (made for stove-top and oven), you may start with a fry pan on the stove top, moving ingredients to an oven-proof pan as you cook.

**See "Mexican Braised Beef Cheeks" for notes on trimming beef cheek.