

# Vermont Bean Soup

2 cups Vermont Grown beans

4 cups water

4 cups chicken broth

1 onion-diced

Herbs-bay leaf, sage and thyme

1 ham hock or 4 pieces bacon, chopped

1 tablespoon olive oil or butter

1 carrot, sliced

2 celery stalks, diced

2 cups chopped spinach or kale or green cabbage

Soak beans in water overnight or for 6-7 hours during the day. Put soaked beans and fresh water into a large pot. Add ham/bacon, oil, herbs and onion. Simmer for a couple hours until tender. Add carrots and celery, cook 30 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add greens, cook 5 minutes. Serve with bread and cheese.

Recipe by Kerry Gawalt©2009

## **Bean Basics-from the North Harvest Bean Association**

### **What Is A Bean?**

Beans belong to the family of plants called legumes. A legume is a plant that produces seeds in a pod (fruit) and may have the ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen. The physical shape of the seed helps distinguish beans from peas and lentils. Usually, beans are kidney-shaped or oval, peas are round and lentils are flat disks. The term "dry beans" includes varieties of beans other than green beans, string beans and soybeans. Dry beans are available uncooked in sealed bags or pre-cooked in cans.

### **Bean History**

Beans are one of the oldest foods known to man; they have been an important part of the human diet for thousands of years. They were one of the earliest food crops cultivated.

Common beans were domesticated about 7,000 years ago in both Peru (the Andean center of domestication) and southern Mexico (the MesoAmerican center of domestication). Both centers of domestication have a wide array of colors. In fact, in Mexico, the Indians developed white beans, black beans and all other colors and color patterns. In the Andes, the same is true, but very lively and bright colors were developed. Since Indian tribes crisscrossed the American continent, these beans and native

farming practices spread gradually all over North and South America, as Indian groups explored, migrated and traded with other tribes.

By the time Portuguese and Spanish explorers discovered the New World, several varieties of beans were already flourishing. The early explorers and traders subsequently shared American bean varieties around the world, and by the early 17th century, beans also were popular crops in Europe, Africa and Asia.

## **Bean Production**

Today, America is by far the world leader in quality bean production. That's because the equipment used for harvesting is the most modern and technically advanced in the world. Each year, U.S. farmers plant from 1.8 to 2 million acres of dry beans.

Beans are planted in May and take about 12-14 weeks to grow to full height. Once the plant has matured, it begins to develop small flowers that vary in color depending on the bean variety. The flowers give way to pods, within which the small beans begin to form.

The warm summer days ripen the beans inside the pods. One or two weeks before harvest, the plants change color from green to golden yellow, signaling they are ready for harvest. The American bean harvest begins in August and continues in various parts of the country until late October.

Americans are the chief consumers of these beans. Per capita consumption is approximately 7.5 pounds. Twenty percent of American-grown beans are shipped to international markets, helping to feed the world.

## **Beans Fit**

Beans are one of the most nutritionally complete foods available. In fact, no other foods comes close to beans in providing protein, iron, magnesium, zinc, potassium and soluble fiber together in high amounts.

Following are some of the reasons why beans are a key ingredient in a healthy diet of all ages:

- High in complex carbohydrates
- High in protein
- High in dietary fiber
- High in folate
- Low in fat
- Low in sodium
- Cholesterol-free
- Rich in vitamins and minerals