

WHITE BEAN SOUP WITH TRUFFLE OIL

YOU CAN USE ANY DRIED WHITE BEANS FOR THIS SOUP. I USED CANNELLINI BEANS, BUT IN THE PAST I'VE USED ALL SORTS OF DRIED WHITE BEANS. I SUSPECT YOU COULD ALSO MAKE IT WITH CANNED BEANS, BUT I'VE NEVER TRIED THAT. I HAVE ONLY SPECIFIED TRUFFLE OIL IN THE RECIPE, BUT WHITE TRUFFLE OIL IS BY FAR THE BEST, IF YOU CAN GET IT. IDEALLY THERE ARE A FEW PIECES OF THINLY SLICED TRUFFLE FOR THE TOP, BUT THAT'S A NEAR IMPOSSIBILITY. I'VE OFTEN SERVED THIS WITHOUT THE FRESH TRUFFLES, AND IT'S JUST AS GOOD.

INGREDIENTS

800 ml vegetable stock (I use Marigold)
250 gm dried white beans – cannellini if you can get them
1 small onion, peeled
1 carrot, peeled
1 small celery stick
3 stalks fresh parsley
3 stalks thyme
1 dried bay leaf
100 g mushrooms – button or any that you prefer, but not too strong
75 g butter
150 ml double cream
3 tsp truffle oil
Salt and pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Soak the beans in plenty of cold water overnight. Drain them and rinse them, then transfer to a large saucepan. Cover with lightly salted cold water.

Quarter the onion, half the carrot and celery and add them to the pan, along with the herbs (don't chop them – you've got to take them out later). Bring to the boil and then lower to a simmer until the beans are soft. About forty minutes to an hour, but it depends on the beans.

Drain the beans, and discard the onion, carrot, celery and herb stalks (the leaves may have fallen off – but don't worry). If you don't get all the bits of onion, it doesn't really matter as they'll just get mashed in, but remove what you can. Blend the beans to a fine puree. You will probably need to use some of your vegetable stock for this, as they will not blend well without some liquid.

Add the remaining stock to the pan, and bring to the boil. Add the beans, and blend them in with a hand held blender. If the mixture is too thin, boil to reduce a little. If it's too thick, wait until you've added your cream and butter to make a decision whether a drop more water is needed.

Slice the mushrooms and sauté in 50 gm of the butter. Cook until most of the liquid has evaporated, but before the mushrooms become crispy.

Whisk cream, remaining butter and truffle oil into the soup. Put a spoonful of the mushrooms into each dish and top with the soup. If you've got truffles, add the fine slices at the very last minute.