

BEANS & RICE!

RED BEANS AND RICE

This is the way red beans and rice were cooked in the old days—loaded with meat and steeped in a rich, natural gravy. You must include a large ham bone, whose marrow gives the beans that creamy texture and distinctive smoky flavor. Many supermarkets now carry only preboned hams, and you may have difficulty finding ham bones. Ask your local packer which butchers still bone their own hams and buy the bones in large batches. Ham bones freeze well, and a good supply in the freezer will enable you to prepare red beans the right way whenever you wish. If you have any left over, red beans freeze beautifully. Just add a little water and perhaps a pinch of salt when you reheat them.

Be sure to use baked rather than country or smoked ham in this and all other New Orleans beans dishes. Smoked ham is too salty and will unbalance the seasonings. Pickled pork is pork shoulder marinated in brine for over a week; New Orleans markets regularly carry it, but elsewhere you probably will not find it. A good substitute for pickled pork is salt pork; with salt pork eliminate all other salt in the recipe.

(for 8 or more)

2 lb. dried red (kidney) beans, soaked
overnight in cold water to cover

2 c. chopped onion	1 Tbs. salt
½ c. thinly sliced green shallot (scallion) tops	½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
½ c. chopped green pepper	⅛ tsp. cayenne
1⅓ Tbs. finely minced garlic	⅛ tsp. crushed red pepper pods
2 Tbs. finely minced fresh parsley	2 whole bay leaves, broken into quarters
1 lb. seasoning (baked) ham, cut into 1-inch cubes	½ tsp. dried thyme
1 lb. pickled pork (page 9), cut into large chunks	⅛ tsp. dried basil
1 large ham bone with some meat on it, sawed into 4- to 5-inch lengths	2 qt. cold water , approximately
	Boiled Rice (page 17—double the recipe)

chicken broth

Drain the soaked beans in a colander and put them, along with all the other ingredients, into a heavy 8- to 10-quart pot or kettle, adding just enough of the cold water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat and simmer on low heat for 2½ to 3 hours, or until the beans are tender and a thick natural gravy has formed. Add about 1 cup of water toward the end of cooking if the mixture appears too dry. During cooking, stir frequently and scrape down the sides and across the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon or spatula to prevent scorching. (If you use a heavy pot and very low heat—just high enough to keep the barest simmer going—you should have no problem with beans sticking to the pot during cooking.) Stir the entire mixture thoroughly just once about every half hour.

When the beans are cooked, turn off the heat. To serve, ladle about 1½ cups of beans, with meat and gravy, over a portion (about ⅔ cup) of boiled rice.

** 2 ham hocks*