Awesome Black Bean Soup

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

- 4 – 15 oz cans black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 32 fl oz carton fat free chicken broth
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 to 1 ½ cup(s)lean smoked ham, chopped
- 1 ¼ cup each chopped raw carrots, onion, and celery
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
- 1 small jalapeno pepper, seeded & chopped (optional)

Instructions

The weather may be getting warm (or HOT if you live in Florida like me), but this is a favorite of mine all year long! I like to cook a big pot of it and freeze individual portions in freezer bags. Then I have a quick, microwavable lunch or dinner whenever I want. I like to go a little heavy on the vegetables when I make it (about 1 ½ cups of each) and sometimes I even add an extra can of beans. This is one that Josee (our resident *'Queen of Beans'*) would love!!!

Combine all ingredients (except cilantro) in large pot over low heat. Simmer about 90 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add cilantro during the last few minutes of cooking time.

Remove the bay leaf. Coarsely puree soup using either a potato masher or by placing 1/3 to ½ of the soup mixture into a food processor (and adding back to remainder of soup). Final product will be a thick and chunky soup. For a thinner soup, add a little extra broth.

Serve with a dollop of fat free sour cream and chopped green onions on top, or get creative and add any other chopped veggies you like.

Can also be used as a warm dip if completely pureed; serve with low fat tortilla chips. Add ½ - 1 teaspoon cumin for a little extra heat if you like.

- Renee