

Red Beans & Rice

Is Nothing says New Orleans and Mardi Gras like a plate of red beans and rice. In my book, Mr. Hansen, the retired sailor in New Orleans, serves it to Georgie with a bit of corn bread to help tame down the Cajun spices for his young palate. Hansen served Georgie a glass of milk with his meal but managed to pour himself a glass of red wine, even though it was during Prohibition! Some things are worth bending the rules for!



Ingredients

1 pound dried red kidney beans
2 quarts water
2 medium onions, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
½ large green bell pepper, chopped
2½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. thyme
1½ tsp. oregano
1½ tsp. garlic powder
½ tsp. cayenne pepper
2 bay leaves
1 pound smoked sausage, sliced in half lengthwise, then cut into 1/2 -inch slices
Shredded cheddar cheese (optional)
Chopped green onions (optional)
Cooked white rice

Instructions

Rinse beans in cold water, then place in a heavy 5-quart pot. Cover with 2 quarts of water and let soak overnight. Don't drain the water from the beans. Add chopped onions, celery and pepper to the beans. Be sure vegetables are under the water, but do not stir the beans. Cover and bring to boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 1½ hours.

In small bowl, combine all spices except bay leaves. Add to bean mixture and add bay leaves. Add sausage to beans and gently stir to combine contents of pot. Cover and simmer 30 more minutes or until beans are soft. Stir occasionally, but not too much or the beans will turn mushy. If thicker beans are preferred, cook uncovered for the last 30 minutes. You can also remove a cup of beans, mash them and return them to the pot, stirring gently.

When beans are cooked to the desired consistency, serve over hot, cooked white rice. If desired you can top them with shredded cheese and chopped green onions, and serve with hot sauce on the side.

Serves 8-10

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