

Cassoulet La Belle Demeure

For 10 people

5 big cuisses de Confit de Canard – cut in half, giving 1 drumstick & 1 top of the thigh piece.

10 Toulouse sausages/good quality thick bangers

10 thick'ish slices Poitrine Fumé/very thick smoked bacon rasher

500g raw haricots blancs/haricots lingots

125 ml dry white wine

100 ml Passata

2 tins chopped tomatoes

5 medium sized onions

5 cloves of garlic

Salt & Freshly Ground Pepper

Herbes de Provence

Breadcrumbs/crushed biscottes

The night before, soak the beans in a pot covered by plenty of cold water. Ensure that there is at least 5 cm of water above the level of the beans.

Next morning, drain the beans into a colander. Cut the sausages in half, browning them off in a large 'fait-tout'/casserole pot. Remove & keep on the side until later. Remove the rind from the poitrine fume (thick bacon rashers) and put on top of the drained raw beans. Cut your pieces of poitrine fume in half, and brown them off too. Remove & put with the sausages.

Flatten the cloves of garlic with the thick end of a heavy knife. Once peeled add these & the chopped onions to the fat that is now at the bottom of your pan. Sweat them off until they start turning a bit brown, then add the glass of white wine to de-glaze the pan. Allow this to bubble and reduce a bit.

Add the Passata, chopped tomatoes, pepper, a good sprinkling of Herbs de Provence & quite a lot of salt. Tip in the raw beans & bacon rind (for the taste & salt), mix well, and add cold water. Ensure there is about 3 cm of liquid above the top level of beans. Bring to the boil (this takes about 20 minutes) and then allow to simmer for 1 hour. Don't hesitate to add some more water if you think it's beginning to look not wet enough – we need sauce for this dish! Turn off the heat and leave it covered. Taste the beans and adjust the seasoning if necessary. These beans need quite a bit of salt....

In the afternoon, create your Cassoulet. Take as deep and as large (surface-area-wise) an earthenware dish that you have, and average about 2 ladles of beans/onions/sauce per person. On top of that, arrange your pieces of bacon (2 pieces per person) at one end, the sausages (again, 2 pieces per person) in the middle, then your pieces of duck (skin side down) at the other end.

Put it in a cold oven and turn the heat to 180°C. After 45 minutes, take it out, and turn all the pieces of meat over (bacon, sausage & duck, which will finish by being skin side up!)

15 minutes before serving, taste the beans to make sure they are hot then add a nice sprinkling of breadcrumbs where you see the most liquid/fat. Put it in the oven again, nearer the top so that the breadcrumbs soak up the excess fat & then grill nicely to become crunchy

Warm up some bowls in the oven and serve with lots of nice crusty bread.

Bon appétit!