



Mom's bean soup, nailed!



I've made Mom's bean soup several times over the years with the idea of someday getting it right. Mom's written recipe is vague on methods and quantities, and I now understand why. Every time I made this, I recognized something that should have been done different. I think I've finally nailed it down.

**Ingredients:**

ham with bone  
dried beans  
potatoes  
celery  
onions  
stewed tomatoes  
brown sugar

1. Soak your beans overnight. We soaked 2 lbs. of great northern beans, 1 lb. of pinto beans, and 1 lb. of black beans. For an average sized ham you will only need about 1-2 lbs. Of beans, but I decided to soak extra beans and can the remainder.
2. Bake the ham! Mom's recipe mentions the "baked ham" and I took the cue. Boiling the ham just doesn't cut it. We rubbed the ham with brown sugar before baking.
3. When the ham is done, let it cool down a bit. Then proceed to carve it up. Make two piles: pure diced ham (cut off anything that is not pure meat), and fat and bone.
4. Put the fat and bone in a pot with enough water to cover, and boil for at least 2 hours, adding water if needed.
5. Put the pure ham in a second pot. Do not heat or cook yet!
6. Add some beans to the ham, stirring as you add, until the bean / ham ratio looks good. I wanted maybe 60% - 70% bean to ham ratio, but added purely by appearance.

7. Add chopped celery. We started with 5 stalks, and ended up adding 7. Stir as you add, and go by appearance to figure your quantity. I like a lot of celery.

8. Mom's recipe calls for 1 large onion, chopped. I think we added two. Again, stir, and go by appearance.

9. Mom's recipe calls for 1 can stewed tomatoes. We used 2 jars of home made stewed tomatoes that we had previously put up, plus another store-bought can. Use stewed tomatoes rather than crushed or diced. I used something other than stewed one time, and remember thinking "Oh, that's why it calls for stewed." I don't remember what that was, but stewed is now preferred. Again, just add your quantity by eye.

10. Add 3 or 4 potatoes, peeled and cut into bite sized pieces. Not too small, we don't want them to turn to mush. I think we added 4, again by looking at it as we stirred the potatoes into the pot.

11. When your bone / fat pot has boiled for at least 2 hours, strain and pour liquid into the ham pot to barely cover. Fill your bone / fat pot back up with water and boil again, in case you need more broth.

12. Cook the bean soup on simmer. After about an hour, add brown sugar to taste. Remember, a little at a time.

13. There is no cook time! Occasionally taste a few beans and potatoes. Add additional strained bone broth if needed. The soup is done when the beans and potatoes are to your liking. Figure on several hours.

14. The soup will be tastier the next day, but who can wait?

Since this is such a large quantity, you can portion some of the soup into containers and freeze. It freezes well. I decided to can the extra soup and the remainder of the soaked beans.

Mom's recipe has no actual quantities because all quantities are decided by the quantity of ham you end up with and by personal preference. I attempted to stay true to what Mom's soup looked and tasted like. Her recipe says: "Seasonings; brown sugar." I never picked up on the semicolon before. I thought she added seasonings, but didn't state what they were, which is so unlike her because her other recipes are meticulously detailed. Now I realize that brown sugar is the only seasoning needed!