

Not My Mother's Smokey Sweet Beans

These beans are a long way from the version I grew up with, which featured ground chunk, onion soup mix, and a large can of Campbell's Pork and Beans. But that said, they are true to the original spirit of my Mom's beans; tangy with good flavor depth. My mom served her beans as a side dish, but to me, these beans deserve center stage. I eat them on their own with biscuits or cornbread, or over brown rice. I make my own [smoked pepper relish](#), and chicken sausage, for this recipe but you don't have to. Replace the spread with any pepper spread you like, or even, in a pinch with an ingredient from the original recipe – ketchup.

1 cup dried pinto or kidney beans
1 cup cannellini beans
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 onions, chopped
¼ pound ground [chicken sausage](#)
2 cups kale, stems and leaves, chopped
Salt, pepper and red pepper flakes to taste
1 pint whole tomatoes
¼ cup cider vinegar
¼ cup Dijon mustard
1 cup [smoked pepper relish](#)

Soak the white and red beans overnight.

Drain the beans, and add enough water to the pot so that the beans are about an inch down from the water surface. Bring them to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer covered until the beans are tender – about 45 minutes. Check the beans frequently after the first 35 minutes – you want them tender, but not overdone and falling apart.

Preheat the oven to 375 °F and drain the beans.

Sauté the onions, in the olive oil, using a large, oven-proof pot -you will be baking the beans right in this pot- over medium low-heat. When the onions are just turning brown, add the sausage breaking it up with a wooden spoon as you stir. Add the kale, and cook until the meat is browned through – about 7 minutes. Add the salt, and black, red peppers to taste.

Turn off the heat and stir in the remaining ingredients. Bake in the oven, covered, until hot and bubbling – about 45 min. Any garnish you would use on chili will be perfect on these beans.

Serves 8-10 people, easily.