



FROM OUR *FLAVORS OF THE SOUTHERN COAST* COOKBOOK

Cuban Black Bean Soup With Chorizo

Sofrito

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

SOUP

1 lb./455 g dried black beans, picked over for stones, rinsed well, and drained

1 yellow onion, quartered

½ green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into 3 or 4 large chunks

6 garlic cloves, crushed under a knife and peeled

2 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp dried oregano

2 bay leaves

Kosher salt

2 Tbsp cider vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper

SOFRITO

3 Tbsp olive oil

8 oz./225 g smoked chorizo links, cut into ½-in./12-mm dice

1 large yellow onion, cut into ½-in./12-mm dice

1 large red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into ½-in./12-mm dice

6 ajís dulces chiles, seeded and minced (see note)

3 garlic cloves, minced

½ tsp ground cumin

½ tsp dried oregano

½ tsp kosher salt

3 Tbsp finely chopped fresh cilantro

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. To Make the Soup:** Put the black beans in a soup pot and add cold water to cover by 1 in./2.5 cm. Bring to a boil over high heat and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and cover. Let stand for 1 hour. Do not drain the beans—the dark liquid will help them maintain their black color.
2. Add the onion, bell pepper, garlic, cumin, oregano, bay leaves, and 1 tsp kosher salt to the pot. Pour additional water into the pot to cover the ingredients by 1 in./2.5 cm. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, adding hot water as needed to keep the beans well covered, until they are tender, about 2 hours. Discard the bay leaves.
3. Transfer the vegetable chunks with about 2 cups/480 ml of the cooking liquid to a blender. With the blender lid ajar to allow steam to escape, purée the mixture. Stir the purée back into the pot. Adjust the soup consistency with more purée or water, as needed. Stir in the cider vinegar and season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep the soup hot.
4. (If making vegetarian soup, skip this step.) While the soup is simmering, make the sofrito. Heat 1 Tbsp of the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chorizo and cook, stirring often (it burns easily), until browned, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the chorizo to paper towels to drain.
5. Add the remaining 2 Tbsp oil to the skillet and heat over medium heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, chiles, garlic, cumin, oregano, and salt. Cook, stirring often, until the sofrito is tender but not browned, about 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the cilantro. Stir the reserved chorizo into the sofrito.
6. Stir about half of the sofrito into the soup. Spoon the soup into bowls and garnish each serving with a spoonful of the remaining sofrito.

BLACK BEAN SOUP WITH SHERRY

This Americanized version of the soup isn't authentic, but it is excellent. Make the soup above, omitting the chorizo. Stir 1/3 cup/80 ml dry sherry into the soup during the last 15 minutes of simmering. Stir all of the sofrito into the soup. Top each serving with a dollop of sour cream and a thin lemon slice. Makes 8 servings.

NOTE: Ají dulce (also called cachucha) is a mild chile used in Puerto Rican and Cuban cooking. Small, round, and green (changing to red, yellow, or orange when ripe), it is easily confused with fiery habanero and Scotch bonnet chiles, so take care when

purchasing at Latino markets. If desired, substitute 1/2 Cubanelle or green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into ½-in/12-mm dice, for the ajís dulces in this recipe.