

Fassolatha: Bean Soup (with hot peppers)

In Greek: pronounced fah-soh-LAH-thah

According to food historians, *fassolatha* has been around since ancient Greek times. It is the national dish of Greece, representing the best of the Greek way of cooking: legumes, vegetables, herbs, and olive oil. Whether you make it with tomato or lemon, culinary tradition dictates that *fassolatha* be served with crusty bread, feta cheese and black olives.

Cook Time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

Total Time: 1 hour, 45 minutes

Ingredients:

1 pound of dried beans (Great Northern work well)
Water
1 cup olive oil
½ teaspoon of ground black pepper
2/3 tablespoon of tomato paste
2 carrots, sliced
1 medium potato, peeled and cut in small cubes
2-3 stalks of celery with leaves, chopped
2-3 small hot red peppers (to taste)
½ teaspoon of sea salt

Preparation:

Day 1: Soak the beans overnight in lukewarm water

Day 2: Drain and rinse the beans, and place in a soup pot with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, cook for 5 minutes, and drain.

Place beans in a clean pot with enough water to cover by about 1 ¼ inch. Add oil, ground pepper, tomato paste, sliced carrots, cubed potato, celery, onion, and hot peppers (these can be omitted completely if preferred)

When full boil resumes, reduce heat, cover and simmer on low heat for about 1 hour and 45 minutes. The beans should be soft and creamy, but not to the point of disintegrating, and since the quality of beans and personal preference varies, check for doneness after 1 ½ hours. Beans may need to be cooked 2 hours or more.

10 minutes before cooking time is up, add the salt. *Fassolatha* bean soup is served warm or at room temperature.

Yield: Serves 4-6

Alternate Preparation: To make “white” *fassolada* (without tomato paste), leave out the tomato paste, cook as above, and just before serving, stir in the juice of 1 lemon.

Preparation Tip: During the simmering time, you may need to add more water. Make sure to add boiling water and not more than a half of a cup at a time. *Fassolatha* is not a puree type of thick soup, but should not be watery.