



Ham and 15 Bean Soup

2 20-ounce bags of dried 15 Bean Soup Mix
2 white onions, diced
3 pounds ham, cubed
2-ish Tablespoons garlic paste
3 48-ounce bottles of V-8 juice
2 cans chicken broth
22 ounces of store-bought basil pesto

Rinse and soak the beans overnight.

Sauté onions in oil in the bottom of a 12 quart, heavy-bottomed, soup pot. Add the ham and the garlic and sauté an additional 15 minutes or so. Don't brown the ham; just warm it until it releases some of its flavor. Add the soaked beans, V-8 juice, and chicken broth.

Cover (with the lid canted to release steam), and simmer on very low for 3 or 4 hours until the beans reach desired doneness. Stir occasionally. Right before serving, add the pesto. Stir well to combine.

To serve, top with grated parmesan cheese.

Yields approximately 10 quarts of soup.

Freezing Instructions

Portion into appropriately sized containers and it will stay fresh in the freezer for months. To serve, heat and top with grated parmesan cheese.

This can be made with all V-8 or with crushed tomatoes and chicken broth in addition to/instead of the V-8. It's very flexible and forgiving – this is a good soup to make with leftover ham at the holidays or to clean out your pantry.

DO NOT, however, skip the pesto. Pesto is THE most important ingredient. Without it, the soup will be too thin and very bland. The pesto adds an incredible richness and depth of flavor, and also thickens the soup. It can be expensive, so consider buying large containers of it at Sam's or Costco for much less. Pesto also freezes well, so it can be divided and stored that way.

