

Pinto Beans and Cornbread: The Southern Staple That Has Fed Families for Over a Century

1 smoked ham hock or 4 slices bacon, chopped



OVEN
425°F

TIME
20 to 25 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the Pinto Beans:

- 1 pound dried pinto beans
- 6 to 8 cups water
- 1 smoked ham hock or 4 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, optional

For the Cornbread:

- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar, optional
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup melted butter or bacon drippings

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** Step 1: Sort and soak the beans: Pick through the beans and remove any debris. Rinse well, then soak overnight in water. If you are short on time, you can use a quick-soak method by boiling them for a few minutes and letting them sit for an hour.
- 2.** Step 2: Cook the beans: Drain the soaked beans and place them in a large pot with fresh water. Add the ham hock or bacon, onion, garlic, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes if using. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Cover loosely and cook for 1 1/2 to 2 hours, or until the beans are tender and the broth is rich.
- 3.** Step 3: Prepare the cornbread batter: Preheat your oven to 425°F. In one bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar. In another bowl, mix the buttermilk, eggs, and melted butter. Combine the wet and dry ingredients just until blended.
- 4.** Step 4: Bake the cornbread: Heat a greased cast-iron skillet in the oven for a few minutes. Pour in the batter and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until golden brown and set in the center.
- 5.** Step 5: Serve hot: Ladle the beans into bowls and serve with warm wedges of cornbread. Some people crumble the cornbread right into the bowl, while others keep it on the side for dipping.

SWAPS & NOTES

For heritage-style pinto beans, many Southern cooks keep the

seasoning simple and let the smoky meat do the work.

A ham hock adds depth, but bacon or salt pork can also be used.

If you want a meatless version, leave out the pork and add a

little extra onion, garlic, and black pepper.

Cornbread can be made sweeter or more savory depending on your family tradition.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

The biggest secret to good pinto beans is patience.

Slow simmering gives them the creamy texture and deep flavor that makes this dish special.

If the liquid gets low, add a little hot water as needed.

For the best cornbread, preheat the skillet before adding the batter.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

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