

CONVERSATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: LET'S TALK ABOUT FOOD

CONVERSATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: *the Past*

Dr. Cecilia "CC" Suarez

Charro Beans Recipe



Directions

1. Place the dried beans in a colander, rinse well, and remove any debris or shriveled beans. Soak clean beans in water for 3-4 hours.
2. In a frying pan, cook the chopped bacon until crispy. Add the onions and garlic, and cook until softened. I don't drain the bacon grease because I think it adds to the flavor of the charro beans. However, if there is a lot of it, you can drain most of it before adding the onions, leaving just a little to cook the onions.
3. Add the bacon, onions, and garlic to a slow cooker, along with the clean and soaked beans and rest of the ingredients and spices.
4. Add one additional cup of water (to cover beans), cover, and cook on low for 8-10 hours or on high for 4-5 hours.
5. Garnish with fresh cilantro and/or fresh slices of jalapeños.

Ingredients

- 1 lb dried pinto beans
- 12 oz bacon, chopped
- 1 small yellow or white onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced – remove the veins if you prefer less heat
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 (15-oz) can fire-roasted tomatoes
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/4 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 bunch cilantro, chopped
- Salt to taste

Dr. Cecilia "CC" Suarez Food Memory of Charro Beans

My grandma was THE bean cooker of the family. When family gatherings occurred, people asked my grandma to bring her beans. In fact, no one would eat anyone else's beans but hers. My grandma's soupy pinto beans, also known as charro beans, were delicious as a side or as an entire meal. My mom would tell me stories of how sometimes beans were all they could afford, so while beans were a family tradition, they were also one of the things that sustained us when we didn't have much to eat. The smell of cooking beans reminds me of my grandmother, my childhood home, and my culture.

When my grandma passed, I made sure to continue the tradition of being THE bean maker. I've kept the same traditional recipe but also made other kinds of beans, and now I'm the one people ask to bring the beans to the family gatherings!

*Charro beans, also known as frijoles charros or "cowboy beans", got their name from the Mexican cowboys who ate them.