

# Haricot Bean and Thyme Cassoulet

This recipe comes from the Vendee region on France's Atlantic coast. It is traditionally made with the huge excess of fresh haricot beans that arrive with the harvest. You can make it with canned haricot beans, or any other type of bean really. A filling farmhouse meal from a country that really, really knows how to eat!

*A chunk of ham or bacon chpped into little cubes (optional)*

*1 onion (chopped)*

*2 carrots (sliced)*

*1 tin of haricot beans (drained)*

*OR*

*1/2 cup of dried beans that have been soaked and cooked yields 1 1/2 cups of cooked beans.*

*1 can tomatoes*

*OR*

*1 big fresh tomato (chopped)*

*A good handful fresh thyme*

*1 bayleaf*

*Some slices of ham (optional)*

*fresh bread*

1. In a big pot, heat a little oil or butter.
2. Saute the bacon/ham if you are using it until brown and crispy
3. Add the onion and carrots and cook gently until softened
4. Add the beans (if they are from a can in brine - rinse the beans first before adding them to the pot) and the tomatoes.
5. Add sufficient water so the beans are just barely covered.
6. Add the thyme and bayleaf.
7. Cover and simmer for twenty minutes or so. The tomatoes and beans should have cooked down into a nice, thick stew.
8. Season with salt and pepper to your taste.
9. If you want you can fry some slices of ham until nice and golden and crispy while it is cooking.
10. Serve the beans with fresh crusty bread and the fried ham.

