

Baked Butter Beans

1 pound dry lima beans	3 tablespoons tomato paste
⅓ pound thick-cut bacon	2 tablespoon fresh sage
1 onion	2 tablespoons fresh rosemary
⅓ cup brown sugar	2 teaspoons fresh thyme
¼ cup molasses	2 teaspoons dry savory
1 teaspoon dry mustard	Salt and pepper to taste
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar	

Wash the beans and remove any dirt fragments. Place the beans in a large kettle and fill it with water. Let the beans soak overnight.

Next day, boil the beans in the soaking liquid for 25-30 minutes until somewhat tender. You may want to skim off the foam while it's boiling. Remove the beans with a slotted ladle or spoon. Reserve the cooking liquid, but keep it at a slow boil. Place ⅓ of the beans in a Dutch oven or casserole.

Chop the bacon into small cubes. Chop the onion. Begin cooking the chopped bacon in a skillet until it begins to render some fat. Add the chopped onion, and continue to cook until the onion is tender and the bacon is lightly browned, but not crisp.

Chop the sage leaves. Snip the rosemary, and strip the thyme leaves from the stems.

In a small bowl, whisk together the brown sugar, molasses, dry mustard, vinegar, and tomato paste with about 1 cup of the boiling bean liquid.

Over the beans in the casserole, add ⅓ of the herbs, including the savory, and the bacon and onions. Add ⅓ of the whisked mixture. Continue with two more layers of beans, herbs, bacon and onions, and whisked mixture. Add enough of the boiling bean water to cover the mixture in the casserole. Taste for seasoning.

Bake uncovered in a preheated 350° oven for about 1½ hours or until the beans are tender, but still whole. If the water evaporates too much add a little of the boiling bean liquid during the baking process. You don't want the beans to be dry. There should be some sauce remaining. Don't add any liquid for the last half hour so that the top will brown nicely.