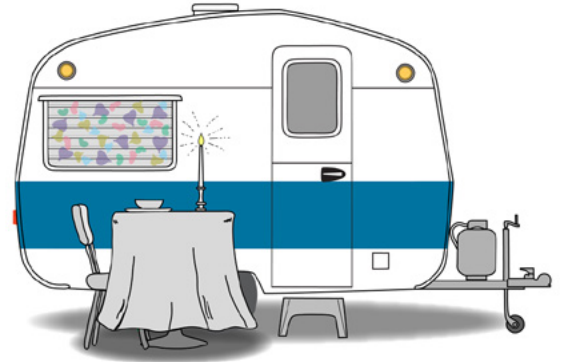


TUSCAN BEANS with SAUSAGES

Serves 4.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe in *The Fine Art of Italian Cookery* by Giuliano Bugialli.

This is a simple dish, probably based upon peasant food. It's easy to make and delicious. The ingredients are readily available, but if you feel adventurous you can make your own sausages. Try to buy vine ripened tomatoes at farmers' markets rather than the tomatoes sold in grocery stores, most of which lack flavor. Or use good canned tomatoes, such as genuine San Marzano tomatoes.



Ingredients:

3 tablespoons olive oil
4 Italian sausages, mild or spicy, your choice
6 fresh sage leaves
4 to 5 cloves garlic
1 pound (454g) very ripe tomatoes
or 1 pound canned tomatoes
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
4 cups (740g) cooked cannellini beans (see below)
or navy or Great Northern beans

Directions:

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the sausages and reduce the heat to low. Sauté for 15 to 20 minutes, turning often, until thoroughly cooked (internal temperature at least 160°F/71°C when tested with a digital thermometer).

Add the sage and garlic. Sauté 2 to 3 minutes.

To peel fresh tomatoes, pierce each tomato with a fork and hold over a flame or in boiling water to loosen the skin. Remove and discard the skin. Chop the tomatoes and purée lightly in a food processor. Add the tomatoes to the saucepan and simmer 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Add the beans and simmer slowly 15 minutes with the pan covered, stirring gently so as not to break up the beans. If the mixture seems dry, add a little water.

Remove from the heat, let stand a few minutes. The sage leaves can be removed and discarded. Serve with plenty of Italian bread.

Preparing the Beans:

If using dry beans, soak the beans in plenty of salted water for 8 hours or overnight. Drain the beans, discarding the water. Cook the beans very gently in simmering water 1 to 1½ hours until tender, or 12 to 15 minutes in a pressure cooker. Can be prepared a day in advance and refrigerated until needed.

If using canned beans, no advance preparation is necessary.