



## Beans Meanz... Meinz

Does anyone not like baked beans? They are the most popular, most sold canned food in the UK and can accompany breakfast, lunch and dinner dishes, sometimes eaten cold, even included with a salad! We have to thank the HJ Heinz Company (founded by Henry Heinz) who introduced beans to the UK in 1886, along with tomato ketchup, available then only from Fortnum & Mason in London. They were considered a luxury item back then and sold for ninepence a can, which is around £2.15 today.

However, the history of baked beans goes back much farther. The French 'Cassoulet', a meat and bean stew, and White Beans and Bacon were popular across Europe and the UK in medieval times and could have been taken by colonists to the Americas in the 17th century. Baked beans as we know them though are made with haricot beans (navy beans in the US) and are native to South America.

The indigenous peoples of the north east of America, the Iroquois, Narragansett and Penobscot tribes included beans in their diet. They cooked the beans in earthenware pots, with various available meats, maple syrup and sometimes even bear fat to produce a wholesome, tasty dish, high in calories, protein and fat, and it was most likely this version that was adopted by our ancestors looking for an easy, cheap and sustainable meal.

The Puritan Christian pilgrims, arriving on the east coast of America from Europe from the 17th century certainly learned the indigenous recipes – and baked beans became a convenience food. As their religion forbade cooking on the sabbath, pilgrims cooked the beans as a Saturday supper, then kept them warm in a wood-fired oven and ate them for breakfast after church on Sundays.

Popularity grew, and every region of the Americas adapted the indigenous recipes to their taste. In Boston, Massachusetts 'Boston Baked Beans' are made with molasses, which makes a rich, caramel sweet dish, along with salt pork, black pepper and, sometimes, onion. They were often slow-cooked to form a crust (arguably the best bit). As Boston was an epicentre for rum production at that time, the byproduct was molasses, so was plentiful and readily available.

The sale of Heinz beans expanded to other less 'exclusive' stores in the UK as they became a firm favourite. Their salesmen were expected to be "at least six foot tall, impeccably dressed and particularly eloquent", according to Heinz, and carried flasks of heated beans to provide samples to potential customers!

The beans were shipped to the UK from their Pittsburgh factory until 1928, when Heinz opened a factory in Harlesden, London, to meet growing British demand. Their main factory in Wigan opened in 1959 and now produces around 383,000 tonnes of products per year, it is also the world's largest baked bean factory.

Heinz originally stuck to their US recipe which included pork, however, it was a little too sweet for tastes in the UK and was eventually modified to a tomato based sauce without maple syrup, molasses or brown sugar. The pork was removed due to wartime rationing, so Heinz baked beans became vegetarian.

The UK remains their biggest single market, with around 1,500,000 cans of Heinz beans consumed every day. Their 'Beans Means Heinz' slogan was born in 1967 and is voted best advertising slogan of all time.

### Ingredients

400g dried Haricot beans  
460ml chicken stock  
230ml water  
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce  
6 tbsp tomato ketchup  
2 tbsp tomato puree  
3 tbsp brown sugar  
1 tbsp apple cider vinegar  
1/2 tsp garlic powder  
1/2 tsp onion powder  
1/2 tsp black pepper  
1 tsp salt  
4 tsp cornflour

### Ingredients

400g dried Haricot beans  
soaked overnight  
250g uncooked bacon lardons  
1 medium onion, diced  
8 tbsp tomato ketchup  
3 tablespoons treacle  
50g brown sugar  
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce  
2 teaspoons salt  
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper  
¼ teaspoon dry mustard

## BAKED BEANS

1. Soak beans in a big bowl of water for 8 – 24 hrs, then drain.
  2. Place beans in a large pot of water over high heat. Bring to a simmer, then skim off foam.
  3. Reduce heat so it's simmering gently (medium or medium low). Partially cover with lid (leaving a crack for steam to escape), then cook for 1 – 1.5 hrs until just tender. (Start checking at 45 min). Beans should be still slightly firm on inside (they're cooked more in the sauce). Drain.
  4. Place all Baked Beans ingredients in a pot (except beans) and stir, then add beans.
  5. Bring to a simmer, then lower heat to medium low and simmer for 20 minutes, without the lid. Stir every now and then so the beans don't catch on the bottom of the pot.
  6. Mix the cornflour with a little water. Pour into pot while stirring, then cook for 2 minutes until sauce thickens – it will thicken quickly. Taste and add more salt if needed.
- Tastes better next day!

## BOSTON BAKED BEANS

1. Bring the pre-soaked beans to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until nearly tender, approximately 1 to 2 hours. Drain and reserve the cooking liquid.
2. Preheat the oven to 165 degrees C.
3. Arrange 1/2 of the beans in the bottom of a 2-quart (2ltr) casserole dish. Place 1/2 of the bacon over the beans and sprinkle 1/2 of the onions over top. Repeat layers once more.
4. Combine ketchup, treacle, brown sugar, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper, and dry mustard in a large saucepan over medium heat; bring to a boil.
5. Pour sauce over the beans. Pour in just enough reserved cooking liquid to cover the beans. Cover the casserole dish with a lid or aluminum foil.
6. Bake in the preheated oven for 1 1/2 hours. Remove the lid and continue to cook, checking every 1/2 hour or so and adding more cooking liquid if necessary to prevent the beans from getting too dry, until beans are soft and tender, 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 more hours.