



**Preparation time:** 15 min

**Cooking time:** 1.5-2 hours

**Serves:** 6 as a starter

*Chef Grace Ramirez*

### Ingredients:

1 pound / 500 g dried black beans

¼ cup olive oil

1 onion, peeled and chopped

1 leek (white part only), sliced

1 red pepper, de-seeded and chopped

4 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped

2 bay leaves

1 tbsp ground cumin

1 tsp salt

8 cups water, vegetable or chicken stock or favourite bone broth

\*more if needed

¼ tsp baking soda (optional)

1 tsp epazote (optional)

Salt & freshly ground pepper

Chopped cilantro (optional)

If you really want to soak the beans in cold water, do it! For at least two hours. It will speed up the cooking process. Drain the beans and set aside.

## Caraotas de mi Madre (Mom's Black Beans)

Black beans, also known as turtle beans, have lots of different names in different countries, and again, everyone has their own method. Soaking vs not soaking is the biggest debate. I used to swear by soaking, but a Mexican friend told me he never soaks and his beans are perfect, they just take a bit longer. So here is a non-soaking, gluten free recipe, with my mom's flavours.

### Method:

- Heat a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add oil and stir to combine, then add onion, leek and pepper, fry gently for 5 minutes or until softened. Add garlic and fry gently for a further minute.
- Add beans, bay leaves and the cumin to the saucepan. Add water or stock. Bring to the boil, then simmer over a medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 1½ hours or until the beans are tender; sometimes they are ready in 1 hour
- Check beans every 30 minutes or so; if they are drying out but are still not tender, add more liquid, about 1 cup of water or stock at a time and continue to cook until done. Do not let your beans dry out they should always have like 1 cup of water on top of them.\*
- When beans are tender, remove from the heat and season to taste. Cilantro as garnish is a must for me.

\*Beans are very moody, depending on the brand, where they come from, and the age, altitude and water hardness. Sometimes they get soft really fast, but sometimes it takes longer. The baking soda will help increase the tenderness, but don't add more than ¼ teaspoon because that may over-soften them, and turn them mushy. You can also cook the beans in a pressure cooker; they take about half an hour.