

Cassoulet is the original pork and beans. Each region in France seems to have their version, goose or duck and whichever sausage the region is known for. My first taste of cassoulet was from Oyama Sausage. It had confit of duck, their own sausage, and such a light tomato sauce. We had it for a Christmas lunch, and for many years since it's been our family's tradition to have Cassoulet at Christmas.

It is a great dish for large groups of people, as it is easily doubled and tripled. It rebounds from being frozen beautifully, and can be made up to 3 days ahead, just hold off with the crumb topping until you're ready to bake it. All that's needed is a crunchy green winter salad, some rustic bread, and big, bold red wine. I served it for a 65<sup>th</sup> birthday last year, and saw many folks going back for thirds! Not that I haven't done it myself.

### *Cassoulet (Ann's North American version)*

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Makes 8 good-sized servings.

#### **Ingredients**

4 pieces thick cut bacon, rind off  
8 chicken thighs, bone in, skin on (keeps the chicken moist while roasting, you can remove the skin before assembling the cassoulet, if desired)  
4 mild Italian sausages (we use our own, but I'm sure store bought will work almost as well)  
2 pork sirloin chops (about 1#)  
1 onion, chopped  
2 shallots, chopped  
1 large clove garlic, sliced  
a big handful of parsley leaves, chopped (tender stalks near leaves, are just fine)  
2 large cans (15 ounces) tomato sauce (about 4 cups)  
1 c dry white wine  
1t salt  
½ t coarse black pepper  
1 bay leaf (the fresher the better)  
1½ c dried cannellini beans or great northern; soaked, cooked & drained (or you can use 2 – 19 oz. tins of cannellini beans or white kidney beans; drained, rinsed and drained.  
1 ½ c fine bread crumbs  
¼ c butter

#### **Directions**

Preheat oven to 450 °.

In a lightly oiled roasting pan, lay out the sausages, chicken pieces, and pork steaks with the bacon on top of all.

Cook for about ½ an hour, stirring and turning a couple of times.

When cooked (test internal temp of chicken (should be about 80°C) transfer all the meats to a large buttered casserole or baking dish. Cut up the bacon when cooled, as well as the sausages and pork steaks. Discard the bones.

Scrape remaining drippings from the roasting pan into a large stove top pot. Reheat on medium heat

Add chopped onion, garlic, and parsley; cook over medium heat until onion begins to yellow, about 5 to 7 minutes. Do not let it brown.

Add tomato sauce, wine, salt, pepper, and bay leaf; bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer for 5 – 10 minutes.

Gently add in the beans, continue simmering for another 5 – 10 minutes.

Pour the bean mixture into the baking dish on top of the meat.

Over medium heat, heat the butter until it's foaming. Add the breadcrumbs and stir while the crumbs lightly brown in the butter.

Spread the crumb mixture over the casserole.

Cover with foil.

Bake at 375° for 40 minutes, remove foil and continue cooking for another 15 minutes.

Note: Can be halved easily, or use two small foil pans and freeze.

Put frozen cassoulet on a baking sheet, and cook covered at 350°F until internal temperature reads 74°C (about 2 hours), remove foil and cook for another 15 minutes.

Cooking time from frozen will vary depending on the depth of the casserole and the size of the portion.