

## White Bean Soup with Smoked Chop

- Olive oil
- 1 leek, cut in half lengthwise, then sliced across
- 1 cup carrot, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed and roughly chopped
- 1 bone-in smoked pork belly chop, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound bacon, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon cayenne
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 cups chicken stock (plus more –or water– to keep beans covered)
- 4 cups dried beans, soaked overnight, or rinsed, brought to a boil, then left off the heat for 1 hour
- Salt and pepper for seasoning
- Parmesan cheese for serving

Heat a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add olive oil, then the leek, carrots, celery, and garlic cloves. Cook for 5-7 minutes till they start to soften, then add the smoked chop or bacon. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes.

Add the cayenne and thyme and cook, stirring, for about a minute till the fragrance is released.

Add the 4 cups of chicken stock, the bay leaves, and the beans. Add more chicken stock or water to cover the beans. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat, cover and cook for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  -2 hours till the beans are tender. Check occasionally to be sure the beans aren't drying out. Season with salt and pepper just before serving.

Serve topped with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and some crunchy bread.