

Mixed Bean Soup with Smoked Sausage

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, chopped
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 large carrot, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 bay leaves
8 cups chicken broth
2 cups mixed dried beans
1/2 pound smoked sausage, chopped
1 (14 1/2-ounce) can whole tomatoes
Salt to taste

In a large Dutch oven or stock pot, heat olive oil. Add onion, celery and carrot and sauté until onion is translucent and carrots are slightly tender. Add garlic, thyme, red pepper flakes, black pepper and bay leaves. Let cook for a minute and then pour in the chicken broth and add the beans. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook until beans are just tender, about 2-2 1/2 hours. Be sure to test several beans and stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Add the sausage and the tomatoes with liquid, breaking them up with a spoon. Taste and add a little salt, if needed. Simmer until everything is heated through.