Main dishes / France

Cassoulet

A deep terrine of creamy Tarbais beans buried under duck confit and Toulouse sausage, baked until a golden, crunchy bread-crumb crust forms and reforms three times over — the soul of Languedoc in a single pot.

Time 360 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 600 g Dried Tarbais beans (or flageolet, soaked overnight)
- ☐ 500 g Duck confit legs (2 legs, from confit-duck-legs)
- ☐ 400 g Toulouse sausage (or coarse pork sausage)
- ☐ 300 g Pork belly (skin-on, cut into large lardons)
- ☐ 200 g Yellow onion (finely diced)
- ☐ 6 g Garlic cloves (minced)
- ☐ 1000 g Chicken or pork stock
- ☐ 30 g Tomato purée (concentrated double)
- ☐ 1 g Bouquet garni (thyme, bay leaves, rosemary)
- ☐ 80 g Day-old white bread (blitzed into coarse crumbs)

Let's make it.

01 Drain the soaked beans and place in a large pot with fresh cold water to cover by 5 cm. Add the bouquet garni. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a steady simmer. Cook for 60–90 minutes until the beans are tender but still hold their shape completely — they must not be mushy, as they will continue cooking in the cassoulet. Season with salt only in the last 10 minutes of cooking, as salting too early toughens the skins. Reserve the cooking liquid.

02 In a large, heavy cassole or Dutch oven, render the pork belly lardons over medium heat until golden and their fat has run. Remove the lardons. In the same fat, brown the Toulouse sausages all over for 5–6 minutes until deeply coloured — do not cook through. Remove. Add the onion and garlic to the remaining fat and cook over medium-low heat for 8 minutes until softened and golden. Stir in the tomato purée and cook 2 minutes more until it darkens slightly. The fond (browned bits) on the bottom of the pot is the backbone of the cassoulet's depth.

03 Preheat the oven to 150 C (300 F). Add the cooked beans, lardons, and stock to the pot with the onion-tomato base. Stir gently to combine without breaking the beans. Nestle the browned sausages and the duck confit legs (skin-side up) into the beans. Add enough additional stock or bean cooking liquid to just reach the top of the beans. The duck skin should be poking just above the surface — it will form the first crust layer. Bring to a simmer on the stovetop, then transfer to the oven and bake uncovered for 2.5–3 hours.

04 In the final 30 minutes of baking, scatter the bread crumbs evenly over the surface in a thin, continuous layer. Increase the oven temperature to 180 C (350 F) and bake until the crumbs are deeply golden and crunchy. This final crumb crust is the defining textural element of a proper cassoulet — it should shatter when a spoon cuts through, giving way to the creamy, smoky, herb-scented beans beneath. Rest for 10 minutes before serving directly from the terrine at the table.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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