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Black Bean Soup

(Makes 6 to 8 servings)

No soaking, no blanching. This Mexican version of black bean soup turns out a rich, dark color because the beans are not soaked, simply rinsed and drained prior to cooking. For best results, after cooking puree half of the beans and liquid and return to the pot before serving. The pureed beans thicken the rest of the soup nicely. Serve with a dollop of sour cream and a garnish of chopped tomato and crumbled cooked bacon in each bowl.

1 package (16 ounces) dried black beans
1 large onion, chopped
2 tablespoons finely chopped Anaheim chile pepper
1 can (14.5 ounces) beef or chicken broth
1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
1 bottle (12 ounces) beer
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon chili powder
2 garlic cloves, minced
Salt

1. Put the dried beans into a colander; rinse and drain well. Pick over to remove any grit.
2. In a 5-quart electric slow cooker, combine the beans, onion, chile, broth, tomatoes with their juices, beer, cumin, chili powder, garlic, and 3 cups of water.
3. Cover and cook on the low heat setting for 7 hours, or until the beans are tender.
4. Carefully remove half of the liquid and beans and puree in batches in a food processor or blender. Return the pureed mixture to the slow cooker pot. Season the soup with salt to taste.