

Caribbean Black Bean Soup

- 1 pound dried black beans
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large red bell peppers, cored, seeded, ribs removed and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch dice
- 2 medium shallots, coarsely chopped
- 2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
- 8 medium cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- 1 Tb. ground cumin
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano
- 2 Tbs. dried oregano
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ Tbs. sugar, or to taste
- 2 Tbs. kosher salt, or to taste

For serving:

- 1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup sour cream, optional

In a medium stockpot, bring beans, 12 cups of water and bay leaves to a boil.

Lower heat; simmer, stirring often, for 3 hours. Add more water if necessary to keep the beans covered.

Meanwhile, in a frying pan, heat oil over medium heat. Stir in peppers, shallots, onions. Cook, stirring often, 8 minutes or until onions are translucent. Stir in garlic, cumin, oregano; cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat; let cool slightly. Purée in a blender.

When the beans are almost done, stir in the purée, sugar and salt. Simmer until the beans are tender, 20 to 30 minutes longer. Adjust the seasonings. Serve with red onion and sour cream, if desired, on the side. *Makes 10 cups; serves 6 as main course.*