

Bean Spread with Italian Herbs

FatFreeVegan

Submitted by: Courtney

(makes about 1 to 1&1/2 cups, or 3-4 servings--which is not very much at all! ;)

Double or triple the recipe at will--extras freeze well, although they will probably need a little flavor boosting when they're thawed.)

1/2 onion, minced
1 clove garlic (peeled but left whole)
1 small stalk celery, chopped fine
1/4 cup green pepper, chopped (optional)
2 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp basil
1/2-3/4 tsp oregano
optional dash cayenne
1 cup cooked, mashed beans (black-eyed peas, white beans, or soybeans-- measure beans before mashing for stronger flavored spread, after mashing for milder)
1-2&1/2 tsp vinegar to taste (white vinegar is good here, or your favorite, or a combination of the two)
1/2 tsp salt
dash black pepper

Sauté the onion and the whole clove of garlic in sauté liquid (broth, water) on medium until the onion is soft. Add celery and green pepper and cook until the onion is transparent. Crush the garlic with a fork (in the pan, or remove from pan to smooch it and then throw it right back in). Add tomato paste and herbs and simmer briefly. Remove from heat, and combine with the mashed beans. Add vinegar, salt, and pepper to taste.

This is really yummy in sandwiches or on toast with sliced fresh tomatoes and other traditional sandwich veggies. And it's especially good with a little roasted garlic spread on the bread or toast as well!

Variations:

1. Italian Bean Spread with Roasted Garlic: Mix some roasted garlic into the finished spread to taste.
2. Zippy Bean Spread: Omit the basil from the basic recipe. When the onion is almost cooked, add 1/2 tsp cumin, a dash of cayenne, and an optional 1 tsp coriander.
3. Quick Bean Spread: Stir 1/4-1/2 cup flavorful tomato sauce into mashed beans, and correct for salt.
4. Bean Spread with Parsley: Omit the tomato paste and herbs. Add 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley to the onion and celery before you remove the pan from the heat. Add 1 tsp soy sauce and the juice of 1/2 of a lemon as you mix the veggies with the beans.