

## Cassoulet II

For years I've been cooking a cassoulet recipe from the Roux Brothers' *French Country Cooking*. Then, up pops my fish hero upstart, Rick Stein, with his *French Odyssey* containing a recipe that is much simpler, probably more like a typical example of the dish from Castelnaudary and, in my estimation, slightly better. (The parsley is my addition - a nod to the more complex version.)

### Planning

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| serves:       | 4        |
| prep time:    | 1 month! |
| cooking time: | 2 hrs    |

### Ingredients

500g dried haricot beans,  
soaked overnight &  
drained  
250g home-salted belly pork  
(petit salé)  
4 Toulouse sausages  
1 medium onion, peeled &  
chopped  
1 bouquet garni (leek,  
celery, thyme, bay)  
6 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 tbs goose or duck fat  
2 preserved duck legs (duck  
confit), divided at the  
joint  
salt  
25g fresh parsley, chopped  
(optional)

### Method

Preheat the oven to 175°C/gas 4. Cut the belly pork into thick slices then halve each slice crosswise.

Heat the duck fat in a flame-proof casserole large enough to hold all the ingredients. Add the onion and fry gently until softened but not brown. Stir in the garlic and cook for another minute. Add the beans and the belly pork, cover with about 1 litre of fresh water and push in the bouquet garni. Bring to the boil skimming off any scum that rises to the surface. Now cover with the lid and bake it in the oven for about 1 hour or until the beans are tender. (This depends upon the age of the beans but it worked in this time for me.) Keep an eye on the water which may all get absorbed by the beans - top up if necessary.

Meanwhile, brown the Toulouse sausages either by grilling, griddling or frying (in duck/goose fat - the most authentic approach). Lift them onto a board and cut each diagonally into three.

Remove the cassoulet from the oven and increase the temperature to 220°C/gas 7. If you are using it, stir in the parsley now. Add the sausages and the pieces of duck confit pushing them down into the beans. Return the casserole to the oven uncovered and cook for a further 45 minutes or until the liquid has reduced and the cassoulet is covered in a dark golden crust.

Traditionally, this should be served straight from the casserole at the table.