

## Chef from the Hood Recipes



**Chef:**

Tom Gonnella

**Restaurant:**

West Pole Bakery & Cafe Occidental, California

**Recipe:**

Tuscan brick oven beans

**Ingredients:**

2 cups dried cannellini beans, picked over & soaked overnight in soft or filtered water.

1/2 pound pancetta, cut in 1/2" chunks

1 onion, diced; & 6 cloves garlic, sliced

6+ cups homemade low-salt chicken stock (plus another 1/2 cup of stock to deglaze pan)

6 cups homemade tomato sauce

12 fresh sage leaves

salt & fresh ground pepper

extra virgin olive oil to drizzle over before serving

West Pole's country-style beans are inspired by 3 generations of Tom Gonnella's family. They are easy to make, but take some time - one of those recipes for a day when you can stay home and putter. Your reward (besides dinner!) is a warm kitchen that smells as if it's the center of a Tuscan farmhouse! Tom says, "Cook beans like pasta. You want them to be al dente, to hold their shape, yet tender." Soak beans in filtered water - the minerals in hard water (and salt) will prevent beans from cooking perfectly. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Drain and cook soaked beans gently in 6 cups of stock for 1 hour. (Add more stock or water if needed while cooking, taste beans often to assess cooking progress - you want them to be firm to retain shape, yet tender.) Preheat oven to 400°. In another pan, sauté pancetta until brown. Set aside and drain excess fat from pan. Add onion to pan and sauté until soft and a bit golden (adding a bit of olive oil if needed). Add garlic and cook for 1 minute. WATCH closely! Sliced garlic can burn very quickly, don't let it! Deglaze the pan with 1/2 cup of chicken stock. Add beans, tomato sauce, pancetta, sage. Taste and season with salt & pepper. At West Pole the beans are placed in a cassiolette, then baked in their brick oven. At home use a deep casserole or Dutch oven and bake in your 400° oven for 30 minutes. Drizzle top of beans with olive oil and serve with crostini, a leafy green salad and a good red from Russian River Valley.