



Cholent

One of the important commandments of the Jewish faith is that Shabbat should be observed as a day of rest. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, so man, too, should lay down his work on the seventh day and dedicate the entire day to relaxation and reflection. Activities considered work are strictly defined: lighting a fire, for example, is prohibited, but using a fire that was previously lit is allowed. This limitation has had a strong influence on Jewish cooking, as in the case of cholent. This traditional Shabbat stew is prepared on Friday before Shabbat begins and then placed in the oven, where it cooks slowly overnight. The hearty stew is then ready to serve in time for the festive Shabbat meal on Saturday.

Many people have strong emotional ties with this dish as its aroma evokes childhood memories of celebrating Shabbat within the circle of the family. Joan Nathan, the author of the well-known cookbook "Jewish cooking in America", calls this rich casserole "Jewish soul food".

For 10 servings:

- 1 cup (150 g) mixed dried beans (borlotti beans, kidney beans, large and small white beans, black beans, and lentils)
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 onion, whole and unpeeled
- ¼ cup (60 ml) olive oil or vegetable oil
- 3 lbs short ribs or beef shoulder in one piece
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ¾ cup (125 g) barley
- 6 potatoes, peeled
- 2–10 cloves of garlic to taste, whole and peeled
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 2 teaspoon paprika
- approx. 1 pound soup bones or marrow bones
- 1 egg per person or to taste
- 2 teaspoons salt
- water

Instructions:

A day before you start preparing the cholent, cover the beans with water and let them soak for 6 hours. Discard the water and rinse the beans. Sauté the onions in oil and brown the meat.

Heat the honey in an 8-quart Dutch oven (8 liters) until it caramelizes. Then add the beans, barley, potatoes, and meat. Dissolve the salt, pepper, and paprika in a little water and add to the pot. Pour on enough water to cover the ingredients.

Add the meat bones, the whole onion with its peel (it adds color to the dish), and the raw, unpeeled eggs. Bring to a boil before Shabbat begins. Cover the pot with aluminium foil and the lid. Place in an oven preheated to 210°F (100° Centigrade) and braise overnight. Cholent should not be stirred!

In the morning, take off the lid and check the water: if the water still covers the meat, let simmer for another 2 hours until the sauce thickens. If there is no water left, add some.

Serve this dish on individual plates or a big platter!

Note: To prepare a vegetarian version of cholent, simply replace the meat with a big can of tomatoes.

And another suggestion: This is a dish which allows your creativity to run wild. You can choose different varieties of beans, add chestnuts, prunes, sausages, or even more potatoes, or make the stew with poultry instead of beef.

