

White Beans/Shrimp with Brown Butter and Tons of Herbs

Serves 6: 3 servings beans, 3 servings shrimp

Gently simmered white beans and cooked shrimp turn luxurious when tossed in warm brown butter with aromatic herbs, garlic, and crushed chili. You can vary the herbs, using any fresh, tender leaves, such as sage, oregano, or even mint, but do use the full amount of parsley, which contributes a lovely freshness. When you pour the piping hot brown butter over the herbs, it will foam up, so choose a deep bowl.

Buy the shrimp the day you'll use them and cook them briefly, undisturbed, so they can brown slightly, their juices caramelizing in the pan. They'll be sweet and firm.

The technique of soaking, blanching, draining, and then simmering the beans very gently in minimal water ensures that they will be fully cooked and easy to digest, without turning to mush.

Tip: This recipe yields more beans than you'll sauce and serve, because I always like to cook extra. They're great in soups, salads, or pasta dishes. If you prefer to wind up with the exact amount of beans needed here, use 1 cup dried beans to yield 3 servings. Start soaking the beans 12 hours ahead (or use the quick-soak method on page 9) and count on simmering them for up to 1½ hours.

Note: If you prefer all beans or all shrimp, double one and leave off the other, making the brown butter in any event.

BEANS

2 cups great northern beans, soaked
1 carrot, peeled and quartered lengthwise
1 small onion, peeled and halved lengthwise
2–3 garlic cloves, peeled
1 small celery stalk with leaves
2–3 sprigs fresh herbs, such as thyme, rosemary, or sage
Sea salt or kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Juice of 1/2 lemon, or to taste

BROWN BUTTER SAUCE

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh tarragon
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme
1 garlic clove, very finely chopped
Pinch of red pepper flakes
8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter

SHRIMP

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined
Juice of 1/2 lemon
Sea salt or kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Lemon wedges, for serving

FOR THE BEANS: Drain the beans and transfer to a pot. Cover with a few inches of water, bring to a boil over high heat, and boil until foam rises, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain the beans and rinse. Wash out any scum clinging to the sides of the pot, and return the beans to the pot. Add the carrot, onion, garlic, celery, herbs, and enough cold water to cover the beans by ½ inch. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover, reduce the heat, and simmer gently until the beans are nearly tender, about 40 minutes. Add ½ teaspoon salt and a generous grind of pepper, cover, and simmer until the beans are cooked through, 30 to 45 minutes more. Remove from the heat.

FOR THE BROWN BUTTER SAUCE: Place the herbs, garlic, and pepper flakes in a 4-cup glass measuring cup or a deep bowl.

In a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Let the butter cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the white milk solids fall to the bottom of the pan and the butter has turned amber brown, about 4 minutes. Immediately pour the butter over the herbs (take care, as the hot butter may sputter).

Remove the vegetables from the beans and discard (or chop and add them to the beans before serving). Drain the beans, and transfer half of them to a serving bowl; discard the herb sprigs. Reserve the remaining beans for another use. Toss the beans with ¼ cup of the brown butter sauce. Season with salt to taste and finish with the lemon juice. Keep warm.

FOR THE SHRIMP: In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the shrimp and cook, undisturbed, until lightly browned on the first side, about 2 minutes. Turn and cook until cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the remaining ¼ cup brown butter sauce and the lemon juice and stir, scraping the bottom of the pan to release any browned bits. Season with salt and pepper.

Serve the beans and the shrimp spooned over the polenta with lemon wedges.