Michigan Baked Beans

1 pound dried navy beans, picked and soaked overnight
½ pound bacon, diced
2 Tablespoons oil
2 cups onion, cut into ¼” cubes
½ cup green pepper, cut into ¼” cubes
2 Tablespoons garlic, paste
1 cup maple syrup
¼ Tablespoon nutmeg
1 tsp white pepper
1 Tablespoons salt
1 quart chicken stock
DIRECTIONS

1. Look over the beans by placing them on a flat, edged surface; make sure that rocks, broken or shriveled beans, or other undesired materials are discarded. Soak the beans overnight in three times their volume of cold water.

2. Drain the beans, and discard the soaking liquid. Preheat an oven to 300°F

3. Place oil in a heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the bacon and cook gently, stirring frequently, until the bacon has rendered most of its fat and crisped nicely. Remove the bacon bits with a slotted spoon, raise the heat to high, then add the onions, garlic, and green peppers.

4. Cook the vegetables until they are soft, stirring frequently — about 5-10 minutes. Add chicken stock to the retained soaking liquid to make 1 quart. Add the beans, syrup, nutmeg, white pepper, and liquid to the pot, stir, and bring to a boil.

5. Cover, place in the oven and bake for 4-6 hours. Before serving, add the salt — if you add it earlier, the beans will not cook as tender.

Note: Michigan’s history is full of timber harvesting, done by loggers who lived months in remote camps deep in the woodlands. Camp cooks relied on dried beans, corn, and other long-lived preserved foods to create nourishing meals for the hard-working loggers.

Recipe provided by Eastern Market Chef Aaron Egan