

at the italian culinary center
20 minute meals: cannellini beans



Above: A delicate bean salad with caviar. You'll want to serve this dish with a mother-of-pearl spoon, as metal can alter the subtle flavor of the caviar. Don't have mother-of-pearl? Use plastic. Below: Canned beans let you make these crostini in under 5 minutes.



—liz zack

White cannellini beans are one of those wonderfully versatile ingredients—canned are almost as good as dried or fresh (and easier to store!). But while dried beans require hours of soaking and boiling to prepare them, using the canned version requires, well, a can opener. For the busy weeknight cook, it's no contest.

Don't wait until you've decided on a recipe to stock up. Every Italian pantry should have a can or two of cannellini beans waiting in the wings. Make any salad heartier by adding them to the greens, increase the protein content of your side dishes by serving them instead of potatoes or stir a can into the final stages of a soup to make it thicker and to vary the texture. Try one of these three quick dishes to get you started.

cannellini bean and caviar salad

Cannellini beans don't always need to be rustic. Here we've paired them with caviar, the ultimate luxury food, for a decadent starter.

- 1 16-ounce can cannellini beans
- zest and juice of 2 lemons
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 4 teaspoons American sturgeon caviar
- 2 tablespoons chives, minced

Rinse beans in warm water. Put a pot of water over high heat to boil and add the beans for a few minutes until warm. In a medium-sized mixing bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, zest and olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Drain beans and toss gently with dressing. Divide beans among 4 small serving plates, top each mound of beans with 1 teaspoon of caviar and a sprinkling of chives. Serves 4

cannellini bean crostini

Toast the baguette slices the day before and keep them in an airtight container until you're ready to use them.

- 1 16-ounce can cannellini beans, washed and well drained
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 scallions, finely sliced, plus extra for garnish
- 4 large sage leaves, chopped, plus extra for garnish
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 baguette, sliced and toasted

Mash beans with a fork or process them in a blender until they attain a slightly creamy consistency. In a bowl, mix beans with the olive oil, scallions and sage.

Season with salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Spoon mixture over crostini. Top with more scallions and sage to taste. Serves 4

sautéed cabbage with beans

Save time by making this dish in pressure cooker as we did, or make it in a heavy-bottomed pot and allot extra time.

- 1 head cabbage, quartered
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 thick slices pancetta, chopped
- 1 16-ounce can cannellini beans, washed and well-drained
- ½ cup dry white wine
- salt and freshly ground pepper

Put the cabbage in a pressure cooker and add enough water to cover. Lock the lid in place and bring the cooker up to full pressure over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook for an additional 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and release the pressure quickly. With a slotted spoon or spider ladle, transfer the cabbage from the pressure cooker pot to a cutting board. Allow cabbage to cool slightly, then slice into thin strips and dry in a paper towel-lined colander.

Heat the olive oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. When shimmering, add the pancetta. Once the pancetta becomes golden, add the sliced cabbage. When the cabbage begins to color slightly, stir in the beans. Add the white wine to deglaze the pan, scraping up any brown bits on the bottom with a wooden spoon. Let wine evaporate completely. Season with salt and pepper, and serve. Serves 4



1 Place the quartered cabbage in a pressure cooker, and add enough water to cover.



2 Close the lid, lock it and bring to full pressure over medium-high heat for 10 minutes.



3 Remove from heat and release pressure. Remove cabbage and slice. Drain in a paper towel-lined colander.



4 In a large skillet, heat olive oil, then cook pancetta and cabbage.



5 When cabbage takes on some color, add beans.



6 Add wine, let it evaporate fully, season with salt and pepper, and serve.

