Southern Butter Beans

Ingredients

- 1 pound large dried lima beans , soaked overnight then rinsed and drained (optional but helps with digestion); *NOTE: if using Instant Pot rinse but don't soak
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter , divided
- 1 medium yellow onion , diced
- 2 cloves garlic , minced
- 1 1/2 cups diced smoked ham
- 1 smoked ham hock , or 2 meaty smoked neck bones
- 8 cups quality chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 bay leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

Directions

1. In a Dutch oven or large pot, heat one tablespoon of the butter over medium-high heat and saute the onion and garlic until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add all remaining ingredients (it's a myth that you shouldn't add salt to cooking beans, it in fact improves the texture). Bring it to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 2 to 2 1/2 hours uncovered, adding more broth or water if needed, until the beans are tender and thickened. Discard the bay leaves.
2. Transfer the smoked ham hock to a plate, remove and shred the meat, then return the meat to the beans. Stir in the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter and add salt and pepper to taste. See blog post for serving recommendations.
3. Slow Cooker Butter Beans: Saute the onions and garlic and transfer them with all remaining ingredients to a slow cooker. Cook on HIGH for 4-5 hours or on LOW for 7-8 hours or until the beans are tender. Stir in the butter and add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Instant Pot Butter Beans: Do not soak the beans overnight, simply rinse and drain. Saute the onions and garlic and add all remaining ingredients. Set to HIGH for 20 minutes (or 25 minutes if beans were not pre-soaked) followed by a natural release. Stir in the butter and add salt and pepper to taste.