



White Bean Salad with Roasted Red Peppers, Smoked Cheese and a Sun Dried Tomato Vinaigrette

3 oz. (1 package) sun dried tomatoes
1/2 cup seasoned rice vinegar (this vinegar has sugar and salt added)*
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
4 cups cooked small white beans, drained*
1/2 cup roasted red bell peppers, cut into very small dice
2 cups (1 8-oz. piece) smoked cheese, cut into very small cubes
1 cup celery, cut into very small dice
1 cup scallions, thinly sliced
1/2 cup parsley, chopped
2 tbsp. fresh thyme leaves, chopped (or 1 tbsp. dried)
1 tbsp. fresh rosemary, chopped (or 1 tsp. dried)



Heat the rice vinegar in a small saucepot until it is near the boiling point. Remove from heat and add the dried tomatoes. Let the tomatoes sit in the warm vinegar for 10-15 minutes, stirring now and then, or until they're soft enough to finely dice. Place the chopped tomatoes into a small bowl. Stir in the olive oil and add salt and pepper to taste.* You may want to use a little more of the seasoned rice vinegar at this point, depending on how much the dried tomatoes absorbed. Set vinaigrette aside.

Toss together the beans, peppers, celery, scallions and parsley in a large mixing bowl. Add the cubes of cheese to the bean mixture, separating them with your hands as they are added. The cheese cubes will want to stick together, so mix them gently into the salad mix a couple times as they are being added.

Last, add about 1/2 of the vinaigrette to the salad mix and toss together. Taste the salad and add more vinaigrette if desired. Serve at room temperature for best flavors. Makes 6-8 servings.

*Cook's note: canned beans are fine for this recipe although they are very soft and may fall apart. Drain and rinse canned beans. Homemade white beans will have a much better texture. This is a nice salad all year long since the fresh ingredients are readily available and the beans, tomatoes, peppers, etc. are all pantry ingredients you can keep on hand.

This salad is so pretty- serve it in clear bowls. Take it to a gathering and share something unique! And don't forget the Chardonnay!