

# Baked Giant Beans with Tomato & Dill

This preparation of giant beans, or *gigantes*, is Greek in origin. In this recipe we pair them with tomato sauce that is cooked with cinnamon, a perfect example of when cinnamon is used in savory dishes, giving the dish warmth and depth. The cooked beans can be used in different ways. A crowd favorite at Saffron is the giant beans simply dressed with lemon juice, olive oil, diced shallots and lots of fresh chopped dill.

8 SERVINGS

## FOR THE GIANT BEANS

3 cups (570 g) dried giant beans *gigantes*, rinsed and soaked in water overnight

1 celery stalk

1 handful of dill, thyme and a bay leaf, wrapped into a bundle with kitchen twine

Sea salt

5 tbsp (75 ml) extra virgin olive oil

1 medium onion, finely diced

1 ½ tsp (3.9 g) ground cinnamon

½ tsp chili flakes

2 tsp (8.4 g) sugar

8 cloves of garlic, chopped

3 cups (750 g) San Marzano tomatoes, crushed by hand

2 tbsp (6 g) dill, roughly chopped

## TO FINISH

1 cup (150 g) cow's milk feta cheese, crumbled

2 tbsp (57 g) unsalted butter

1 cup (64 g) panko breadcrumbs

Dill leaves, for garnish

Extra virgin olive oil, for garnish

## FOR THE GIANT BEANS

Place the giant beans, celery and herb bundle in a large saucepan, cover by 2 inches (5 cm) of water and bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally, until the beans are just tender, about 2 ½ to 3 hours, adding more water as needed to keep the beans covered by 2 inches (5 cm). Season the cooked beans with a generous amount of salt and refrigerate for 1 hour. They can be reserved under refrigeration for up to 3 days in the liquid at this point.

When ready to use, drain the beans and discard the liquid, celery and herb bundle.

In a medium saucepan, heat the olive oil. Add the onion, season with a small amount of salt and cook over moderately low heat until softened, about 6-7 minutes. Add the cinnamon, chili flakes, sugar, garlic, tomatoes and chopped dill. Season with salt and simmer over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has reduced slightly, about 10 minutes.

## TO FINISH

Preheat the oven to 425°F (218°C). In a 13" (33 cm) terra cotta baking dish, mix the cooked beans with the tomato sauce and sprinkle the feta on top. Bake in the upper rack of the oven for about 15-25 minutes, until the beans are bubbling and the cheese is browned. Remove the baking dish from the oven and let stand for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, heat the butter until it starts to bubble, add the breadcrumbs and cook over moderate heat, stirring continuously, until they are toasted and have a deep golden color, about 4-5 minutes. Season with salt and top the beans with the breadcrumbs, garnish with leaves of fresh dill and a drizzle of olive oil.

**CHEF'S TIP:** When soaking beans, use a container that is at five times bigger than the amount of beans. Forgot to soak the beans? No problem. Place them in a large saucepan and cover with 3 inches (8 cm) of water. Bring them to a boil, turn off the heat and let them stand in the liquid for 5 minutes. Drain the cooking liquid, rinse under cold water and use in the recipe as needed.

