

# Caramelized Beans with Tomato & Cabbage

Serves 4

If the idea of having three baked bean recipes in one book doesn't thrill you beyond belief, we are not the same. They're all different, all special, all worthy of your time. This saucy, tangy recipe might be the closest of the three to traditional "baked beans," but these are sweet not from brown sugar or molasses but rather from jammy tomatoes and browned cabbage. I understand that that probably sounds like when people describe dried fruit as "nature's candy," but it's true: When caramelized and concentrated, both tomato and cabbage do become perceptibly sweeter and tangier, truly approximating that baked-bean feeling. While you could scatter a handful of olive oil–doused breadcrumbs on top to soak into the tomatoey broth and wrinkled cabbage leaves, I intentionally leave them out here, since they block the top bean-tomato-cabbage layer from caramelizing—my favorite part, the reason we're all here.

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## Ingredients

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

4 tablespoons olive oil

½ small head (about 1½ pounds) cabbage, cut into 1-inch wedges

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 large shallot, thinly sliced

2 (15-ounce) cans large white beans, such as butter beans, gigante, or cannellini, drained and rinsed

8 ounces tomatoes, preferably small, halved if small, quartered or chopped if large

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar, sherry vinegar, or white distilled vinegar

A hunk of Parmesan cheese for grating on top, ricotta for spooning over, or feta for crumbling (optional)

# Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Heat the butter and olive oil in a large skillet (preferably oven-safe) over medium heat. Add the cabbage, cut-side down, and season with salt and pepper. Cook, without disturbing or peeking, until the cabbage is deeply golden brown on one side, 8–10 minutes. Using tongs or a fish spatula, carefully flip and repeat on the other side, another 8–10 minutes.
3. Once the cabbage is well browned on both sides, add the shallots and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring or shaking the skillet occasionally to make sure the shallots can make contact with the pan, until they are nicely browned and totally tender, 5–7 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, place the beans in a 1½- to 2-quart baking dish. Once the cabbage and shallots are nicely browned and tender, add them to the baking dish, along with the tomatoes, vinegar, and 1 cup water. Season well with salt and pepper and rearrange the goods, adjusting some of the wedges of cabbage and pieces of tomato so that they make their way to the top. (They will get so delicious in the oven.)
5. Place in the oven and bake until the liquid has reduced by quite a bit, everything is bubbling up the sides of the dish in a sticky, caramelized way, and the top is delightfully browned, bordering on crisp, 50–60 minutes.
6. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly. Serve with or without cheese.

**DO AHEAD:** The beans can be made 2 days ahead, wrapped, and refrigerated. Reheat in a 425°F oven, uncovered, until warmed through and bubbling once more, 20–30 minutes. Leftovers can also be scooped into a skillet and rewarmed on the stovetop.

**EAT WITH:** A hunk of sour, rustic bread, preferably made with hearty whole grains, for dipping and dunking (a modern “brown bread” perhaps).