1. Pick over the black-eyed peas carefully, removing any bits of rock and unsavory-looking peas.

2. Rinse well and cover with five cups of water. Soak overnight.

3. Strain out the beans, and bring the water to a boil.

4. Return the beans to the pot, with the diced ham, bay leaf and a teaspoon of the salt, and let them simmer for about 45 minutes.

5. At the end of 45 minutes, taste the beans for doneness; if they are soft but not mushy, they are just right.

6. Pour in the rice and mix in all the other seasonings including the second teaspoon of salt and the diced ham.

7. Stir the mixture well, and bring the liquid up to a simmer.

8. Let them cook for another 20 minutes.

9. Turn off the heat, and let the dish rest for 10 minutes. Taste. The beans should be just a little more tender, the rice perfectly cooked.

**Ingredients**

(serves 4)

- 1 cup dried black-eyed peas
- diced ham
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup raw rice
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 clove of minced garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- minced fresh parsley
- a little thyme
- black pepper