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Zuppa di Ceci

Chickpea soup is a peasant dish customarily cooked to venerate the spirits of our lost ancestors on 2nd November which is the *Day of the Dead* - the day when Italians visit the graves of their friends and family with flowers and candles. This recipe comes from Ticino near the Gothard Tunnel into Switzerland. Chickpeas are a good allotment crop.

- 500g large chickpeas
 - 8 pork chops or a meaty knuckle of ham and a trotter or a small gammon
 - 1 large onion
 - 8 sage leaves
 - 4 cloves garlic, peeled
 - 2 sticks of celery
 - 3 tbsps white flour
 - 5 tbsps olive oil
- Squisito Trapani salt, pepper & pinch of baking soda

Soak chickpeas overnight plenty of water with a teaspoon of baking soda. Rinse well to remove any any grit then place in a bowl with oil, sage, garlic and flour. Mix well and let stand. Meanwhile, fill a stockpot with 4 litres of water and bring to the boil. Coarsely chop the onion and celery and put in the pot with the chickpeas and spices, stirring so the flour does not go lumpy. Simmer covered for 30-40mins. Add pork chops trimmed of excess fat or better still a meaty knuckle of ham and a trotter.

Slow cook adding water if necessary. For a thicker soup you can add a handful of cannellini beans. Serve the soup with a sprinkle of pepper and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serves 8.

Note: If you have any leftover chickpeas use them as salad with layer of sun dried tomatoes, sliced onion, a handful of capers seasoned with salt, pepper and extra virgin olive oil.

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