Tomato and White Bean Soup With Lots of Garlic

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YIELD4 servings

10 garlic cloves

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 (14-ounce) cans white beans, such as cannellini or great Northern, including their liquid

1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, use best quality

optional: ham, cubed

1 cup stock or water, plus more as needed

 Kosher salt and black pepper

 Heavy cream, for serving

 Peel the garlic, then smash the cloves using a meat pounder or the bottom of a heavy skillet until wispy and flat.

 In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, heat the olive oil, then add the crushed garlic, and cook, smashing with the back of a wooden spoon and stirring occasionally, until golden brown and beginning to stick to the bottom of the pan, 3 to 5 minutes.

 Add the white beans and their liquid, crushed tomatoes, stock or water, and season with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then partly cover, reduce heat, and let simmer until thickened and fragrant, 15 to 20 minutes.

 Using an immersion or regular blender, purée the soup until smooth. Add ham. Add cream or stock or water to thin as desired. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle with heavy cream before serving.