

Vegetarian Minestrone

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Extra virgin olive oil
2-1/2 quarts vegetable broth (plus a bit more, if needed)
1 cup dry white wine
1 onion
2 leeks
2 carrots
1 rib celery
5-6 cloves garlic
4 small tomatoes
1/4 c basil, chiffonade
1/4 c Italian parsley, chopped
2 white potatoes or Yukon Golds, cubed (1 cm)
3/4 c dried pasta shapes (I use a good Italian brand like Barilla)
8 oz cooked red beans
8 oz cooked garbanzo beans
1 c kale, chiffonade
1 sprig rosemary
2 sprig marjoram
1 or 2 parmesan rinds
salt and pepper
grated parmesan reggiano
Italian parsley leaves, whole, for garnish

Peel onion and cut into quarters, then slice thinly. Cut green part off leeks, trim off bottoms, then halve lengthwise. Rinse thoroughly- they tend to have a lot of trapped dirt. Slice thinly into half-rings. Peel garlic and slice thinly. Chop celery into small cubes (1/4"). Peel and quarter carrots, then make crosswise slices about 1/8" thick. Peel and seed tomatoes, then cut into coarse cubes.

Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onions, leeks, celery, and carrots. Stir and sautee until tender and starting to brown slightly. Add garlic and cook for another minute. Add tomatoes and cook for another minute, stirring gently. Deglaze pot with the wine. Reduce by half, then add stock, half the basil, half the parsley and the herb sprigs (for convenience, you can tie the sprigs

together to make a bouquet garni). Add parmesan rinds. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Add potatoes, pasta, and kale. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper- but it's ok to slightly undersalt.

Just before the pasta and potatoes are tender, add beans and the remaining basil and parsley. If soup is too thick, add a little more stock. When all is tender and ready, remove herb sprigs and cheese rinds. Serve in warm bowls. Top with some grated parmesan and decorate with parsley leaves.

This works very well with a fattish sort of white wine, but it's versatile- I've paired it well with fino sherry, cremant d'Alsace, and even viognier.

For vegetable broth, if you're rushed, the canned stuff from Swanson is surprisingly excellent and non-salty. Vary the vegetables, depending on what you've got laying around. Try to have a variety of textures. The pasta shapes can be orreciotti, bows, shells, little tubes... just about anything. Peeling the tomatoes is simplified by making a small cross-shaped cut in the bottom, then plunging into boiling water for 20 seconds or so.

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