

La Ribollita

Adapted from Maxine Clark

This is a classic Tuscan bread soup that is very flavorful and comforting.

1 lb. dried cannellini beans
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 carrot, chopped
1 celery rib, chopped
2 leeks, finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 small Dutch (white) cabbage, shredded
1 large potato, peeled and chopped
4 medium Zucchini, chopped
2½ cups Italian sieved tomatoes (passata)
2 sprigs fresh rosemary
2 sprigs fresh thyme
2 sprigs fresh sage
1 whole dried hot red pepper
2 lb. cavalo nero (Tuscan black winter cabbage, aka lactinato kale) or savoy cabbage, finely shredded
sea salt and freshly ground pepper

To Serve

6 slices coarse crusty white bread
1 clove garlic, peeled and bruised
extra virgin olive oil
freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Soak the cannellini beans overnight in plenty of cold water.

Heat half the olive oil in a heavy stockpot and add the onion, carrot and celery. Cook, gently for about 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Next add the leeks and garlic and cook for another 10 minutes. Add the Dutch cabbage, potato and zucchini, stir well and cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in the soaked beans, passata, rosemary, thyme, sage, dried pepper, salt and plenty of black pepper. Cover with 2 quarts water (the vegetables should be well-covered), bring to the boil, then turn down the heat and simmer, covered, for at least 2 hours, until the beans are very soft.

Transfer 2-3 ladlefuls of soup to a bowl and mash well using the back of the ladle. Return to the soup to thicken. Stir in the cavolo nero and simmer for another 15 minutes. Allow to cool then refrigerate overnight.

The next day, slowly reheat the soup and stir in the remaining olive oil. Rub the bread with garlic. Arrange the bread over the base of a tureen or individual bowls and ladle the soup over it. Drizzle with extra olive oil and serve with plenty of Parmesan.