

Minestrone Soup

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

3-4 Tbsp good olive oil

1 onions, small dice

2 carrots, small dice

1 bulb fennel, small dice

2-3 stalks celery, small dice

4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 14-oz can whole peeled tomatoes (canned chopped tomatoes or fresh tomatoes work, I just prefer the texture of using whole peeled)

1 bunch kale (de-ribbed, washed, and roughly chopped)

1/4 cup red or white wine (optional)

4 cups veggie stock

5 thyme sprigs (tied together with twine or picked and finely chopped)

1 bay leaf

1 Parm rind

pinch red pepper flakes

1 cup dried cannellini or other white beans (or 1 15-oz can)

1/4 box ditalini pasta or other tiny pasta like elbow or small shells

Parmesan, finely grated for topping each bowl

Step 1:

If using dried beans, soak the beans overnight in a large pot, covered by a several inches of water.

Step 2:

The next day, add more water to the beans if necessary (they should be covered by a few inches). Add half an onion and/or a few garlic cloves if you have them but it's not necessary. Do not add salt at this time. Bring to a boil and then simmer the beans for 2 hours or until they are completely tender. Set aside to cool.

Step 3:

Preheat a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the olive oil, onions, carrots, and fennel. Season with salt and sauté for about 10 minutes or until onions are translucent. Next, add the celery and season again with salt. Sauté for about 5 minutes. Add thyme and a pinch of red pepper flakes.

Step 4:

Open the canned tomatoes and pour into a bowl. Use your hand to squeeze the tomatoes, breaking them up into chunks. Add them to the pot, season, and sauté, stirring constantly, for 5-10 minutes to cook out some of the raw tomato flavor.

Step 5:

Deglaze with wine and bring to a simmer, scraping up anything stuck to the bottom of the pan. Add the veggie stock and season with salt and pepper. Add the parm rind and bring to a low simmer. Allow to simmer for about 10 minutes before adding the kale and beans (strained). Check for seasoning and continue to simmer on low while you prepare the pasta.

Step 6:

Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil. Cook the pasta according to package instructions, strain, and rinse with cold water. Add to the soup and check again for seasoning.

Step 7:

Serve, topped with lots of Parmesan, a drizzle of olive oil, and cracked black pepper.