

Minestrone Soup

Serves 12, or a smaller crowd of lumberjacks

2 Tbsp olive oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped
2-4 garlic cloves, smashed and finely chopped
1, 16 oz can Italian plum tomatoes (whole, in juice)
1 ham hock, if desired
4 bay leaves
1 cup chopped celery
2 cups chopped cabbage or chard
2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped small
2 medium waxy potatoes, peeled and cut into 12" cubes
2 tsp oregano
1 cup string beans
2 cups unpeeled zucchini, cubed
1 cup white beans, precooked or canned
2 cups small pasta, precooked, al dente
½ cup chopped parsley
1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Method:

Sauté onion and garlic briefly in olive oil in kettle used to make the soup. When onion is slightly colored, add ham hock, tomato, water and bay leaves. Bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and simmer covered for one hour. Retrieve ham hock and once cool, remove meat and finely shred. Skim any foam from the top of the pot.

Add celery, cabbage and carrots, and simmer for 15-20 minutes. Add potato, string beans and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add cooked beans, return to a simmer and add zucchini and parsley. Season to taste with salt, pepper and crushed red chili pepper.

To serve: spoon pasta into a bowl and cover with soup. Top with parmesan, if desired.

(By Chef Dan Brophy, Summer Cooking With Herbs Series 2012, Portland Nursery / Stark)