

Vegetarian Minestrone with Basil Pesto & Garlic Croutes

Adapted from *Barefoot Contessa, Ina Garten*

Serves 8 to 10:

Ingredients

Vegetarian Minestrone:

1 large onion, chopped
3 carrots, chopped
3 celery stalks, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
2 1/2 cups diced butternut squash
2 teaspoons chopped thyme leaves
2 tablespoons olive oil
26 ounce chopped tomatoes
6 to 8 cups vegetable stock, preferably low sodium
1 bay leaf
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
15 ounce can of cannellini beans
2 cups cooked small pasta, like ditalini or tubetti
8 to 10 ounces baby spinach or baby kale leaves
1/2 cup dry white wine

Basil Pesto:

2 cups packed basil leaves
2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
1/4 cup pine nuts
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Garlic Croutes:

1 baguette
extra virgin olive oil
1 garlic clove, cut in half lengthwise

Garnishes:

Basil Pesto
grated Parmesan cheese
Garlic Croutes

Preparation

Chop onions, carrots and celery into fine dice; mince garlic cloves and thyme leaves.

Use a U-peeler to peel a small butternut squash.

Cut in half lengthwise, remove the seeds, and dice.

Heat olive oil in a dutch oven or soup pot over a medium flame until shimmering.

Add the onions, carrots, celery, garlic, thyme and squash to the pot.

Stir often, until the veggies are softened, about 10 minutes.

Add chopped tomatoes and pour 6 cups of vegetable stock into the soup.

Add a bay leaf, and kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

Bring to a boil, then turn down heat to simmer soup uncovered for 30 minutes, until veggies are tender.

In a medium saucepan, cook 1 cup of pasta in plenty of salted water until al dente.

Remove the bay leaf from the pot and stir the cooked pasta into the soup.

Drain the cannellini beans, add them to the pot, then heat until the beans and pasta are warmed through.

Add more stock, a cup at a time, if the soup is too thick.

To make Basil Pesto, place basil leaves in the bowl of a mini-processor or blender.

Top with chopped garlic, pine nuts and grated parmesan cheese.

Season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Begin processing while slowly adding olive oil.

Blend until completely pureed, then taste and adjust seasoning if needed.

Leftover pesto can be stored in a container with a layer of olive oil on top to help keep it green.

To make the Garlic Croutes, preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Slice a baguette on the bias and brush both sides of each slice with olive oil.

Bake for 6 minutes.

Rub the cut garlic clove over each slice of toasted bread.

Just before serving, toss the baby spinach or kale leaves into soup until wilted and fully incorporated.

Add the white wine and swirl in two tablespoons of the pesto.

Taste and adjust the seasoning, if needed.

Ladle the soup into bowls and drizzle with more Basil Pesto.

Freshly grate Parmesan cheese over and top with the Garlic Croutes.