

Italian Bean and Pasta Soup

Soup for Supper Cook Book

Williams - Sonoma

Serves: 6



When the weather is cool and you feel like staying indoors, it's time to make "pasta e fagioli", a favorite Italian meal in a bowl. It can be brothy or quite thick, depending upon personal taste. Cooking the pasta separately from the soup helps the pasta maintain its texture. If you have made the soup in advance, add the cooked pasta when reheating it, as the pasta can become mushy if it stands too long in the soup.

Ingredients

2 cups dried beans, cranberry, cannellini, or Great Northern
3 tablespoons olive oil
½ cup chopped pancetta
1 chopped yellow onions
2 carrots, peeled and chopped
2 stalks chopped celery
4 large cloves garlic, minced
8 cups chicken broth
1½ cups canned plum tomatoes, diced
2 teaspoons salt, plus salt to taste
ground pepper, to taste
½ pound small dried pasta, shells or ditalini
extra virgin olive oil, for serving
grated Parmesan cheese, for serving

Recipe from Thom Hackett's Recipe File at www.thomcooks.com

Cooking Method

Pick over the beans and discard any misshapen beans or stones. Rinse the beans, drain, and place in a saucepan. Add water to cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil for 2 minutes, then remove from the heat, cover, and let stand for 1 hour. Drain.

In a saucepan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the pancetta and sauté, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the onion, carrots, celery, and garlic and sauté, stirring often, until softened, about 8 minutes longer. Add the water or stock, beans, tomatoes, and 2 teaspoons salt and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer until the beans are very tender, about 1 hour.

To give the soup more body, remove 2 large spoonfuls of beans and vegetables and puree in a blender or food processor, then return the puree to the pan. Season with salt and pepper and reheat gently.

When the soup is almost ready, bring a large saucepan three-fourths full of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta, stir well, and cook until barely al dente, about 8 minutes or according to package directions. Drain and add to the soup. Simmer for an additional 5 minutes.

To serve, ladle into warmed bowls. Top each serving with a swirl of extra- virgin olive oil, some grated Parmesan cheese, and a liberal grinding of pepper.