

Taste is in our nature



Vegetable minestrone Ligurian style

Serves 6-8

Minestrone means 'big soup' and it is a meal in a bowl. There are no strict rules about the ingredients other than they are seasonal and combine well. To speed up the process I have included canned beans but you can soak dried beans overnight, drain well, then cover them with water, cook until soft and then add them to the soup.

The pasta, or rice, makes this a thick, substantial soup but can be omitted. For extra flavour you can add stock to replace some of the water. The Ligurian aspect of this minestrone is that the soup is poured over a good spoonful of pesto.

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup pesto
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and mashed
- 2 medium sized waxy potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 2cm cubes
- 450g fresh ripe tomatoes, peeled and diced or 450g can diced tomatoes
- 2 medium carrots, finely chopped
- 2 medium zucchini, roughly chopped
- 1 cup swede, peeled and finely diced
- 500g fresh silver beet or spinach, chopped
- 3 sticks celery, strings removed and finely chopped
- 200g small pasta (optional)
- 1 bay leaf
- salt to taste
- 2 x 450g cans cannellini beans, rinsed well
- 1 large brown onion, peeled and diced finely
- 1.5 litres water (or stock)
- freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup finely grated parmesan

DIRECTIONS:

Put the oil into a large saucepan and heat over a moderate heat.

Add the onion and garlic and cook gently until softened but not brown.

Add the remaining vegetables, apart from the beans and spinach, and stir well.

Cover for 5 to 10 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally.

Pour on the water and add the bay leaf and a good grinding of pepper.

Add salt if you are not using salted stock. Cover and simmer gently for at least 1 hour.

Add the beans and silverbeet or spinach and bring the soup to a rolling boil.

Add the pasta and boil for 6 to 8 minutes, depending on the size of the pasta.

Add more stock if it is too thick. Taste for seasoning.

To serve – place a spoonful of pesto in each bowl and pour the hot soup on top. Scatter the cheese on top or serve separately. Serve with crusty bread.