



Minestrone

SERVES 6-8

I've traveled to Italy many times during the winter months, and one of my favorite ways to warm up is with a steaming bowl of minestrone. There are many variations of minestrone, which is a soup made with seasonal vegetables. Depending on the region and time of year, different vegetables are used, and often beans, pasta, or rice are added. This recipe is one of my favorites, and I serve it often at my Italian dinner parties topped with croutons soaked in extra virgin olive oil. It's a hearty vegetarian dish that goes well with a leafy salad or grilled cheese sandwich.

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil	2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 pound onions, diced into ½" cubes	½ teaspoon fresh black pepper
1 pound carrots, diced into 1/2" cubes	1 ounce of Parmesan cheese rind (optional)
1 pound celery, chopped into ½" cubes	2 cans Cannellini beans, with juice
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced	2 cups baby spinach leaves
2 quarts vegetable broth	1 cup Arborio rice
1 pound gold potatoes, chopped into ½" cubes	Croutons for garnish

PROCESS:

In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Add the onion, carrots, and celery and cook until vegetables are soft, about 15 minutes.

Add the garlic and cook for another minute. Add the vegetable broth, salt, pepper, potatoes, and cheese rind (if using). Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer for about 45 minutes. Stir in the beans, spinach leaves, and rice.

Cook another 20 minutes until rice is tender. Taste to see if more salt is needed, then serve in warm bowls with croutons. Leftover soup keeps in the refrigerator up to a week.