

Idiot's Kitchen Recipe – Minestrone Soup

Recipe from www.idiotskitchen.com – Adapted from Cook's Illustrated Magazine



Ingredients:

¼ pound Pancetta, cubed – I buy 2, ¼ inch slices from the deli counter
1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
1 medium Onion, diced
2 Carrots, diced
1 stalk Celery, diced
4 cloves Garlic, minced
1 (15 oz) can Cannellini Beans with their juices
1 (28 oz) can Diced Tomatoes with their juices
2 cups Chicken Stock, homemade or low-sodium store bought variety
6 cups Water
1 rind from a wedge of Parmesan or Romano cheese
1 teaspoon (or more) dried basil
1 teaspoon (or more) dried oregano
2 bay leaves
½ teaspoon (or more) crushed red pepper flakes
2 small zucchini, quartered and chopped
3 ounces (1/2 bag) Baby Spinach, coarsely chopped
½ cup small pasta such as Ditalini – small tubes, or elbow macaroni
1 cup V8 juice
Salt & Pepper
Chopped Fresh Basil for garnish
Grated Parmesan or Romano cheese for garnish

In a large soup pot or Dutch oven, cook ¼ pound of cubed Pancetta in 1 Tablespoon Olive Oil over medium heat. Work slowly, about 5 minutes, to render the fat out of the pancetta without getting the meat too brown. When the pancetta is golden and has rendered most of its fat, add 1 chopped onion, 2 chopped carrots, and 1 chopped stalk of celery to the pot. Sauté the vegetables over medium high heat for 5 minutes.

Add 4 minced cloves of garlic, 1 (15 oz) can of Cannellini Beans and their juices, and 1 (28 oz) can of Diced Tomatoes and their juices to the pot. For liquid, add 2 cups of Chicken stock and 6 cups of water. Season by adding the rind from a wedge of parmesan or romano cheese, dried basil, dried oregano, bay leaves, salt & pepper. For a little kick, add ½ teaspoon of red pepper flakes. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 45 – 60 minutes.

After the soup has cooked for 45 minutes, add the chopped zucchini, chopped spinach, and ½ cup of small pasta such as Ditalini or elbow macaroni. Add 1 cup of V8 juice. Be sure the soup is still simmering, cover and cook for an additional 20 minutes until the vegetables and pasta are tender.

Check and adjust the seasonings. You will probably need to add more salt & pepper. Ladle into bowls and garnish with chopped fresh basil and grated parmesan or romano cheese.

Easily makes 8 servings. Freezes well and is even better the next day.

Extra good with warm Focaccia.