



Dale and Allison's Famous (sort of) Minestrone

1/3 cup best quality extra virgin olive oil
1 very large yellow onion, thinly sliced into rings
4 large carrots, peeled and thickly sliced on the diagonal
1 fennel bulb, chopped
2 large peeled potatoes cut into a one-inch dice
1 each green, yellow and red bell pepper, cored and seeded and cut into ½ inch squares
3 medium zucchini (or yellow summer squash) not peeled and cut into one-inch dice
1 cup of green beans, sliced on the diagonal
1 medium size head of green cabbage, medium shredded
6 cups of beef stock (if using canned make sure it's low-or no-sodium)
5 cups of water
1 to 1 ½ cups of dry red wine (you knew that would be in there, right?)
1-- 35-ounce can of Italian style plum tomatoes, with the juice, but stems and seeds removed
2-- 35-ounce cans of crushed tomatoes
4 tablespoons dried oregano
2 tablespoons dried basil
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
2 cups of white kidney beans (cannellini)—drained
1 pound of fresh mini cheese ravioli or fresh cheese tortellini
1 ½ to 1 ¾ pounds of Italian turkey sausage that has been cooked, drained and sliced into chunks
Outside rind of a 3-inch chunk of Parmesan or Romano cheese
Freshly grated Parmesan or Pecorino-Romano or Asiago cheese (or whatever cheese you prefer).

1. Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a very large stock pot on medium heat for a few minutes until it is hot. Add the slices of onion and cook for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Stir in the carrots and sprinkle with a tiny pinch of salt and a twist of freshly ground black pepper. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Add the fennel and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.

4. Add the potatoes and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add the peppers and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Add the zucchini and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
7. Add the green beans and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
8. When you've got all the vegetables added, sprinkle in a couple of pinches of salt and a couple of twists of freshly ground pepper and give it a stir.
9. Stir in the shredded cabbage and cook about 8-10 more minutes.
10. Add the beef stock, water, wine, tomatoes, crushed tomatoes, oregano and basil. Taste to see if you need more salt and pepper.
11. Put the Parmesan (or Romano) cheese rind into the pot and bury it in the middle of the soup. (Really, we're not kidding.) Heat the soup until it begins to boil and then reduce the temperature. Put a lid on the pot and simmer for about 2 ½ to 3 hours until the soup looks thick.
12. About 20 minutes before you're going to serve the soup, stir in the cannellini beans and the mini ravioli or tortellini. Turn the heat up on the soup so the pasta will cook. Make sure you keep your eye on it and give it an occasional stir to prevent it from sticking. Just before you serve it, stir in the sausage (or if you have any non-meat eaters in your house, let everyone put his/her own sausage in their soup bowl.)
13. Ladle your beautiful minestrone into a nice soup bowl or shallow pasta dish and sprinkle with the grated cheese of your choice.
14. Enjoy this with Chianti or a Montepulciano D'Abruzzo!

This soup easily makes 12 or more servings. If you can't use it all at one time, you can freeze it. You can also cut the recipe in half. Also, you can use other vegetables or beans. If you prefer red kidney beans to white, then use them. If you don't like fennel, use celery instead. The key to making this soup is in the individual addition of the vegetables. You can't just dump them in all at once because of their individual textures and sizes.