

Minestrone

By Linda Carloni

This recipe is adapted from Marcella Hazan's *Essentials of Italian Cooking*. I've changed some of the quantities and cut back the fat content. It can now be made vegan, vegetarian or omnivorous. It takes a lot of chopping and a lot of unattended time on the stove, but I think it's worth it. I've served it many times, and it's always a hit. It turns out as more of a hearty stew than a soup.

Makes about 8 servings. Best the day after the day you make it. Keeps about 3-4 days in the refrigerator and freezes well.

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 Tbsp butter (fine to sub olive oil, but the butter adds a nice flavor)
- 1 cup thinly sliced yellow or white onion (not red)
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced celery
- 2 cups peeled, diced potatoes
- ½ lb zucchini, diced
- ½ lb green beans, diced
- 3 cups shredded cabbage (Savoy is best, but standard green is fine) (you really do need this much!)
- 4 – 5 cups broth, beef or vegetable (a quart of boxed broth plus water works well or 4 - 5 cups of hot water with two tsps. of broth base).
- the crust from a piece of Parmesan cheese, scrubbed or scraped clean (optional, but it really adds a nice flavor)
- 1 14 oz (approx.) can diced tomatoes (preferably petite-diced)
- 1 14-oz can cannellini beans or 3/4 cup dried white beans, cooked
- 2 links of Italian-style sausage (optional), cooked and cut into small pieces
- Salt
- Parmesan grated to taste at the table (optional)

Choose a stockpot large enough for all the ingredients. Put in the oil, butter if using and sliced onion and cook over medium-low heat until the onion wilts and yellows a bit but is not browned. Add the diced carrots and cook for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring once or twice. Repeat the procedure with the celery, potatoes, zucchini, and green beans, stirring each type of veg in one at a time, then cooking 2 or 3 min. before adding the next. Then add the shredded cabbage and cook for about 6 minutes giving the pot an occasional stir. I generally chop as I go along, so the intervals are longer or shorter depending on how fast I am. That's fine, the recipe is very flexible and forgiving.

Add the broth, the cheese crust, the tomatoes and their juice, and a little bit of salt. (Go easy on the salt. You can correct the seasoning later.) Cover, bring to a boil at medium-high, then lower heat and cook at a simmer for 2.5 hours. Then add the drained cooked or canned beans and

the sausage if using. Cook at a simmer for at least another 30 minutes. If necessary, you can stop the cooking at any time and resume it later on. Minestrone should never be thin and watery, it should be soupy thick. If you should find that the soup is becoming too thick, you can add water.

Before turning off, taste and correct for salt. It usually needs some, but remember you may be adding salty Parmesan at the table.