

Italian Bean and Vegetable Soup (Zuppa alla Frantoiana)

This traditional soup from Lucca is often made to celebrate the olive harvest. Yes, I know, this happens in late autumn but I love this soup and have adapted it here with early spring vegetables. The original recipe calls for double the amount of extra-virgin olive oil so feel free to dial up the oil if you have a special bottle on hand or if its chilly out. For spring, I am using the lighter touch.

Ingredients

1 cup dried borlotti (cranberry) beans
1/2 cup dried cannellini beans
4 garlic cloves
3-4 sprigs savory
3-4 sprigs fresh thyme
4 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon or more, to taste sea salt
1/2 bunch tuscan kale, stemmed and cut into thin ribbons
1/2 small head savoy cabbage, leaves cut into large squares (5 1/4 cups)
1 large carrot, chopped into 1/2 inch cubes (1/2 cup)
1/2 medium bulb fennel, trimmed and thinly sliced
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 small yellow onion, chopped (3/4 cup)
1 small leek, chopped and rinsed well
1 small (1/2 pound) zucchini, sliced 1/4 inch thick
1 cup peas, fresh or frozen
herbs such as spearmint, lemon balm, parsley, dandelions, fennel fronds, roughly torn or chopped, for garnish

Method

1. In a large pot, add the beans and enough water to just cover (about 2 1/2 cups). Let soak at least one hour or up to overnight.
2. After soaking, drain and rinse the beans. Add 3 quarts fresh water, 3 garlic cloves and half of the winter savory to the pot and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce to a strong simmer and cook until beans are very soft but not yet falling apart, about 1 1/2 hours. Turn off the

heat and let rest. Beans can be cooked up to one day ahead.

3. In a small pot, add the smashed garlic and the oil. Cook over low heat, turning occasionally, until the garlic is softened, 5 minutes. Stir in the remaining winter savory. Cook, stirring occasionally, until darkened slightly, about 4 minutes. turn off the heat.

4. Transfer the oil with garlic and savory to the pot with the beans. Bring to a simmer and season with salt to taste, starting with 1/2 teaspoon. Stir in the kale, then return to a simmer. Stir in the cabbage and bring to a simmer and cook 10 minutes. Add the carrot and fennel and cook 4 minutes. Add celery and cook 2 minutes. Finally, add the onions, leek and zucchini and simmer 30 minutes. Stir in the herbs and peas and let rest for a few minutes. Taste and adjust for salt.

Source: modified from <https://www.saveur.com/italian-bean-vegetable-soup-recipe> (8 servings)
