

FARM TO TABLE | GREENHOUSE BASIL

The Boston Globe

Ribollita

June 21, 2006

Serves 8

In Italian, ribollita means "boiled again." This classic soup combines cannellini beans with garlic, onion, Swiss chard, zucchini, leeks, and basil, pureed and layered with stale bread. Make this a day before you want to serve it.

1 1/2 cups dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight in cold water and drained

7 cups cold water

6 cloves garlic (4 whole, 2 chopped)

8 leaves fresh sage

8 tablespoons olive oil

3 teaspoons salt

1 large carrot, chopped

1/2 celery rib, chopped

1 large sweet onion, chopped

1 bunch Swiss chard, leaves only coarsely chopped

2 zucchini, finely chopped

2 leeks, white and green parts, chopped

1 cup of fresh basil, loosely packed

2 tablespoons tomato paste dissolved in 1/4 cup water

Black pepper, to taste

1 loaf (1 pound) stale country-style bread, sliced

Extra olive oil (for sprinkling)

1. In a large, deep pot, combine the beans, 7 cups of water, whole garlic, and sage (do not salt the water at this point). Bring to a boil. Add 2 tablespoons of the oil, cover, and cook for 1 1/2 hours.

2. Turn off heat, and when liquid stops boiling, add 2 teaspoons of the salt; set aside.

3. In a large skillet, heat the remaining 6 tablespoons of olive oil. When it is hot, add the carrot, celery, onion, and 2 chopped cloves of garlic. Cook over low heat, stirring often, for 20 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, remove 1 cup of cooked beans; set them aside. Remove 2 cups of bean cooking liquid; set aside. Set a bowl over a colander. Drain the remaining beans into the colander.

5. In a food processor, puree the beans from the colander. If mixture seems too thick, add some of the 2 cups of cooking liquid. Transfer the pureed beans to the cooking pot. Add the reserved whole beans. Stir in the sauteed vegetables, chard, zucchini, leeks, basil, dissolved tomato paste, the remaining 1 teaspoon salt, ground pepper, and enough reserved bean cooking liquid to cover the mixture.

6. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, cover, and simmer gently, stirring occasionally, for 2 hours. If the mixture seems thick, add more of the bean cooking liquid or water.

7. To serve: Layer the soup and stale bread in large bowls. Sprinkle with olive oil.

Note: To make in advance: Use a large container to layer bread and vegetables. Refrigerate overnight. Reheat just before serving.

Adapted from "In Nonna's Kitchen" ■

© Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company