

Cultivating Cooks!

Monk Soup – Zuppa di Pasta e Fagioli



Annie Nardone



My kids chose this recipe for Zuppa di Pasta e Fagioli because of its similarity to another family-favorite Italian dish called Pasta Fagioli (fa-ZOOL). We christened our medieval selection ‘Monk Soup.’ Our version uses homemade chicken stock, but this wonderfully flexible soup can be vegetarian if you use a vegetable broth, and vegan by leaving out the Parmigiano-Reggiano. I serve the soup with rustic bread, olives, special deli cheeses like sharp cheddar and brie, speck ham, and a shallow bowl of olive oil and herbs.



You use:

- 1-2 medium-sized onions, finely chopped
- ½ c. extra virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped (I use 8-ish. Italian families double the suggested amounts of garlic!)
- 1 28-ounce can chopped Italian tomatoes with the juice
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon dried or fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried or fresh basil, chopped

¼ c. fresh Italian parsley, chopped
4 cups (two cans) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
6 cups stock (chicken or vegetable)
1 c. dry white wine
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 box or bag of your favorite orzo, ditalini, or tortellini
Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and additional olive oil

Note 1 – We use homemade chicken stock. To make a batch, save the bones from a rotisserie chicken. Place them in a pot with a quartered onion and a carrot or two, cover with water, and simmer for about two hours. Strain and use immediately or freeze for later.

Note 2 – Amounts of garlic and herbs are to your taste. Wine is optional.

Note 3 – Cook the pasta in a separate pot, not in the soup, or the broth will become starchy and the pasta will overcook.

You cook:

First, sauté the onion in olive oil in a large stock pot until soft, then add garlic and cook for 3-4 minutes more, stirring continuously.

Add the chopped tomatoes with their juice, bay leaf, rosemary, basil, and parsley. Cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes or until the mixture attains a smooth, thick texture. Stir often.

Add the beans, stock, wine, salt, and pepper. Stir slowly and bring to a low boil. Turn down to simmer and cook 15 minutes more, stirring occasionally. Turn off the heat, remove the bay leaf, cover the pot, and let the soup rest for another 10 minutes.

While the soup is resting, prepare the pasta in another pot according to package directions. Drain and return to its cooking pot, adding a small scoop of broth to prevent pasta from sticking together.

To serve, scoop pasta into a soup bowl and ladle soup over the pasta. Sprinkle with cheese, a pinch of chopped parsley, and drizzle a bit of olive oil over the top.

~ Serves 6 ~

