

Umbrian Bean Soup

I first tasted this wonderful soup in the ancient walled city of Spello, Italy. It was a sunny day in early October as my wife and I were exploring the streets of this picturesque old town.

As the bells tolled the lunch break, we noticed a little trattoria with a sign in the window: "Zuppa Di Fagioli Della Casa" (House Bean Soup) We ducked in and tried it. It was fabulous, and was served with fresh homemade bread! Every time I make this soup I revisit that beautiful fall afternoon!

Preparation Time: 3 hours (includes time for the soup to rest) - Servings: 4

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Prep and organize ingredients so they are easy to add. Prep a total of 3 cloves of garlic: 2 chopped garlic in the soup and 1 whole, peeled clove in the salad dressing. Prep about 2-1/3 C. chopped onion: 2-1/4 C. for the soup and 2 T. for the salad dressing.

Umbrian Bean Soup

1 tsp. olive oil
2 cloves garlic (smashed and chopped)
2-1/4 C. yellow onion (chopped)
1-1/2 C. celery (chopped)
1 C. white wine
1 bay leaf

6 C. fresh-cooked cranberry or pinto beans
- or -
3 cans reduced sodium pinto beans (if you're not cooking beans)
1 cube Edward and Sons "Not Chicken" bouillon
1 C. water
3 C. low-sodium vegetable broth

4 pieces smoky tempeh (browned and finely-chopped)

6 T. fresh marjoram leaves (lightly-chopped)
- or -
2 T. dry marjoram

olive oil when serving soup (1 tsp. per bowl)

Salad and Dressing

Fixings for green salad

Creamy Dill Dressing:

2 T. fresh dill (chopped, stems discarded)
1 large garlic clove (whole, peeled)
2 T. sweet or yellow onion (chopped)
2 T. good olive oil
3 T. rice wine vinegar
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. fresh ground pepper
1 C. plain, nonfat yogurt

Additional Items

1 whole grain roll per person or a loaf of hearty bread.

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Cooking Beans

If you're cooking dry beans today, finish cooking them early in the day. There are 3 different methods you can use to prepare beans for this soup.

1. After soaking the dried beans overnight, drain the water off of them today. Rinse them well and add 6 C. fresh water, and 1/2 tsp. salt. Bring to a boil, cover and cook over med-low heat for 1 hour. Let stand in cooking water when finished cooking. Use beans and cooking water in the soup.
2. If you haven't soaked beans yet, you can do a "quick soak" method. Bring dry beans and water to a rolling boil, remove them from the heat and allow them to sit for 45 minutes. After 1 hour and 15 minutes, drain off soaking water, rinse, and add 6 C. fresh water and 1/2 salt and follow cooking directions above. Let stand in cooking water when finished cooking.
3. If you are not cooking dry beans, you can simply use 3 cans pinto beans. Use reduced sodium canned beans if you can find them. Also reduce the bouillon to 1/2 of a bouillon cube. Drain and rinse beans. Add 1 C. of low-sodium vegetable broth to the soup with the beans.

Umbrian Bean Soup

1. Sauté chopped garlic, onion and celery in oil in a large, deep kettle until celery turns bright green.
2. Add wine and bay leaf and boil 5 minutes. Add cooked beans with their cooking water. If using canned beans, follow directions in step #3 above.
3. Add bouillon cube, water low-sodium vegetable broth and tempeh. Return to a boil. Reduce heat to low and cook for 30 minutes.
4. Stir in fresh (or dry) marjoram. Return to a boil, cover and remove soup kettle from heat. Let stand 1 - 2 hours.

Salad/Dressing

Make green salad for diners on individual plates.

Creamy Dill Dressing:

Blend all ingredients (except yogurt) in a food processor until finely chopped. Add yogurt and blend until creamy smooth. Transfer to a serving pitcher.

Preheat oven to 250°.

Final Ingredients/Serve

Wrap rolls or bread in foil and place in preheated oven. Warm 10 minutes.

Serve bowls of hot soup with 1 tsp. good olive oil drizzled over the top of each bowl. Place warm bread and salads on the side. Allow diners to dress their own salads.

What I've Learned from this Recipe

Don't bring the soup to a prolonged boil after adding the fresh marjoram. It will release it's maximum flavor within a few minutes of cooking.

Let us know what you think, and ask any questions you may have! chezdon@plate6.com