

Soupe Au Pistou

Serves 6

The ingredient list is long, but don't feel like you must have everything to make the soup. Let the recipe be your guide and use whatever vegetables you have on hand, whatever looks good at the Farmer's Market, and (have I mentioned this yet?) don't forget the pesto.

For the soup:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large carrot, trimmed, peeled, and cut into ½-inch cubes
1 celery rib, trimmed, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
1 leek, white and light green part chopped, rinsed well*
2 garlic cloves, minced
4 cups less-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
2 cups water
1 medium Yukon gold potato, peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
6 ounces green beans, trimmed, and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 medium zucchini, chopped
½ large fennel bulb, fronds removed, thinly sliced
2 cups thinly sliced rainbow chard
2 ears corn, kernels cut off
2 tomatoes, seeded and diced
½ cup orzo or other small pasta
1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

For the pesto (pistou):

2 cups loosely packed basil leaves
2 tablespoons pine nuts
1 garlic clove, minced
½ small tomato, seeded and diced
Pinch of salt
¼ cup olive oil
½ cup freshly grated parmesan
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Heat the olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven. Add the carrot, celery, and leek and cook for about 6 minutes or until soft. Add in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Pour in the vegetable broth and water. Add the potatoes and bring the soup to a simmer. Simmer gently for 10 minutes.

Stir in the green beans, zucchini, fennel, and chard and return the soup to a simmer. Simmer for another 10 minutes.

This recipe came from *Minced* at www.minced.wordpress.com.

Stir in the corn, tomatoes, orzo, and cannellini beans and cook for another 10 minutes or until all the vegetables are soft. The vegetables in this soup should not be crisp so continue to cook the soup if needed. Season the soup to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. If needed, add a little more water or broth.

To make the pesto, combine the basil leaves, pine nuts, garlic, tomato, and salt in a mortar and pestle or blender. Add some of the olive oil and begin to slowly pound or process the pesto. Slowly add the olive oil continuing to pound (or process) the pesto until all of the olive oil has been added and a lumpy sauce has formed. Stir in the grated parmesan cheese and season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Serve with the soup

*Leeks are notoriously dirty with each layer holding grit and mud. I like to chop my leek into small pieces and then place them in a large bowl of water to clean them. I swirl the leeks around with my hand to dislodge any dirt and then let them sit in the water for a few minutes to allow the dirt to settle. I then scoop the leeks out with a slotted spoon and drain them in a strainer. Don't pour the leeks and their soaking water into a strainer as you'll end up covering them with the dirt that you took the time to remove.