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by Liz Robb

Clear Italian Vegetable and Orzo Soup

Ingredients

1 stick of celery 2 small carrots 1 leek 75g cabbage A handful of small chestnut mushrooms 1 tablespoon of olive oil 1200ml home-made vegetable stock* 2 bay leaves 1 tablespoon of tomato puree 120g canned cannellini beans 45g orzo Salt and freshly milled black pepper For the vegetable stock you will need:

 1 onion 2 sticks of celery 2 leeks 2 carrots 1 parsnip A handful of mushrooms A couple of ripe tomatoes 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil 3 bay leaves A small bunch of parsley A few sprigs of thyme A sprig of rosemary A teaspoon of black peppercorns A little salt 2-3 tablespoons of light soy sauce 2 litres of cold water

Servings
4
Person

Preparation

1. 1.
2. Cut the celery into 4 or 5 pieces, peel the carrots and cut them into 3 pieces, then slice each piece into very fine thin matchsticks. Wash the leek, take off the tough outer layer then slice really finely. Slice the cabbage into short, thin shreds then wipe the mushrooms, halve them and cut into very thin slices. 2.
3. Heat the oil in a large pan and very gently sauté the celery, carrot, and leek for 5 minutes, then add the cabbage and the mushrooms and cook for a further 2-3 minutes. 3.
4. Pour in the hot stock, add the bay leaves and the tomato puree and stir. Simmer gently for 6-8 minutes. 4.
5. Add the beans and the orzo and continue to cook until the pasta is ready, for about another 5 minutes. Season to taste if needed, depending on the seasoning in the stock used. Remove the bay leaves and serve.
6. For the vegetable stock...
7.
8. 1.
9. Very roughly chop the onion, unpeeled, the celery, leeks, carrots and parsnip. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and sweat the vegetables gently for just a few minutes. 2.
10. Stir in the roughly chopped mushrooms and tomatoes, then the herbs, peppercorns, salt and soy sauce, and pour in the cold water. Bring to the boil and simmer, covered, for at least an hour, preferably for two. 3.
11. Pour the stock through a sieve, pressing gently to make sure all the liquid goes through. Store in the fridge once cooled, or freeze for future use.

Cooks Note

This simple Italian style soup is tasty and nutritious, a clear broth with small amounts of pasta and pulses, and plenty of healthy vegetables.
It is particularly good if you take the time to produce your own home-made vegetable stock, but there are plenty of alternative ready-made ones available to buy if you're short of time.
Serves 4-5