

Tuscan White Bean Soup

From Cooks Illustrated Jan & Feb 2001, pg 21

6 oz Pancetta, cut into 1x1 inch cubes
1 lb dried cannellini beans, rinsed and picked over
1 large onion, unpeeled and halved pole to pole
1 small onion, diced medium
4 medium unpeeled garlic cloves
3 medium garlic cloves, minced
1 bay leaf
Alt and ground black pepper
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 sprig fresh rosemary
Balsamic vinegar

In a large, heavy-bottomed dutch oven, cook pancetta over medium heat until just golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Add 12 cups water, beans, halved onion, unpeeled garlic, bay leaf, and 1 tsp salt; bring to boil over medium-high heat. Cover pot partially; reduce heat to low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until beans are almost tender, 1 to 1 1/4 hours.

Remove beans from heat, cover, and let stand until beans are tender, about 30 minutes. Drain beans, reserving cooking liquid (you should have about 5 cups, if not, add more water). Discard pancetta, onion, garlic, and bay leaf. Spread beans in even layer on baking sheet and cool.

While beans are cooling, heat oil in now-empty dutch oven over medium heat until simmering. Add diced onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 5 to 6 minutes. Stir in minced garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add cooled beans and cooking liquid; increase heat to medium-high and bring to simmer. Submerge rosemary sprig in liquid, cover, and let stand off heat 15 to 20 minutes. Discard rosemary sprig and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Ladle soup into individual bowls, drizzle each bowl with olive oil, and serve, passing balsamic vinegar separately.

Use leftover soup to make ribollita

Alternative Recipe (Faster)

6 oz Pancetta, cut into 1x1 inch cubes
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 small onion, diced medium

3 medium garlic cloves, minced
5 cans cannellini beans (16oz), drained and rinsed
1 sprig fresh rosemary
Balsamic vinegar, for serving

In a large, heavy-bottomed dutch oven, cook pancetta over medium heat until just golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Discard pancetta and add oil to pot with pancetta fat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 5 to 6 minutes; stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add beans, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 3 1/2 cups water. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to simmer. Submerge rosemary in liquid; cover and let stand off heat 15 to 20 minutes. Discard rosemary and adjust seasonings with salt and pepper. Ladle soup into individual bowls, drizzle each bowl with olive oil and serve, passing vinegar separately.

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