



This is an "open the fridge and see what's available" soup. You can put any hardy vegetable in here, and it will be delicious. I use rainbow chard as the green because the stems are soup-friendly and I'm all about using every bit of the plant that I can. You can substitute greens and any veg to make this your own. Enjoy this peaceful bowl of warmth on a cold winter night.

Winter Veg Soup

My winter veg soup could be 100 percent vegetarian. I include bacon nuggets and beef broth for a more robust flavor. Omit the bacon and use vegetable stock, and you have a perfectly fine soup for your vegetarian self and friends. I like this soup because it is very filling, fast to make, and chock-full of veg. Seriously, it takes longer to prep the vegetables than it does for the pot to cook, but don't let that scare you. All in all you could be prepped and eating within an hour. Serves 4 easily.

Ingredients

1 drizzle of extra virgin olive oil

3 to 4 slices of thick cut bacon (applewood smoked, recommended), diced

½ onion, chopped

2 carrots, scrubbed and chopped

2 parsnips, peeled and chopped

1 large stalk of celery, chopped

1 jalapeno, seeded and minced

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 bunch of Swiss chard, leaves and stems, washed, dried, chopped (rainbow chard is pretty)

1 can of diced fire-roasted tomatoes (14 oz)

4 to 5 potatoes, about 1.25 pounds, scrubbed, cut into big chunks (Yukon gold doesn't have to be peeled)

1 can of white beans (any sort), drained and rinsed

4 cups of low sodium beef broth

1 parmesan rind or grated parmesan cheese

1 sprig of rosemary, as is

2-3 springs of thyme

For the vegetable prep, chop the onion, carrots, parsnips and celery into bite-sized pieces, but not too small! You don't want them to disappear in the soup. I like for my vegetables to retain their crunch, so I chop them spoon-sized.

Strip the chard from its stems, and tear or cut up the leaves. The leaves should be left large because they wilt down to almost nothing in the soup. Cut the ends off of the stems, and then chop the stems to a size similar to your carrots. Chard is a great vegetable in that the stems are quite tasty, and if you use Rainbow chard they are also quite beautiful.

Mince the jalapeno and garlic. Dice the bacon, open your tomato and bean cans, and rinse the beans. Wash the potatoes but don't cut them yet. Wait until it is time to add them to the soup, so that they don't brown.

In a large soup pot or Dutch oven, add a small drizzle of olive oil and the bacon. Use medium heat and let the bacon fat render. Do not let the bacon get crispy. Cook it to its chewy state (safely edible but not crispy). Take it out and let it sit on a paper towel.

Into the bacon fat, add your veg prep: onion, carrots, parsnips, celery, chard stems only, jalapeno and garlic. If your bacon didn't throw much fat, add a splash of canola or olive oil. Cook over medium heat for 8-10 minutes, stirring now and then. Don't let the veg get mushy.

At this point, chop your potatoes into good-sized pieces – chunky! Big chunks! Add the chard leaves, parmesan rind, and potatoes to the pot. Let them warm through for about 3 minutes, stir a bit, then add the tomatoes, rosemary and thyme. Stir that for a minute, then add the beef stock. Bring to a boil, and reduce to a simmer for about 10 minutes. Taste. Add salt and pepper as you like. If you get a tinny taste from the tomatoes, add a pinch of sugar.

After 10 minutes, add the beans and bacon. Let this bubble gently. As soon as the potatoes are tender, (another 10 minutes) the soup is done. Taste as you go! Take out the herb stems (discard). Take out the parmesan rind and chew on it (chef's treat). Give a taste for salt and pepper. Top with more parmesan cheese if you wish, or a dash of hot sauce, or both! Serve with crusty bread.

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