**Zuppa Toscana**

2 tsp. olive oil

1 lb. Italian sausage

4 oz. bacon, diced

1 c. chopped yellow onion

3 (14.5 oz.) cans low-sodium chicken broth

2 c. water

1½ lb. Russet potatoes, halved then sliced

1½ tsp. granulated sugar

½ tsp. fennel seeds, slightly crushed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 c. half and half

1½ c. packed chopped kale

Finely grated Romano cheese for serving

Heat oil in a large non-stick saucepan over medium-high heat. Crumble sausage and add to saucepan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until cooked through. Drain onto a plate lined with paper towels; set aside. Add bacon to saucepan, return to heat and sauté 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add onions to bacon in saucepan and sauté until bacon is cooked and onions are translucent, about 3-5 minutes longer. Add broth, water, potatoes, sugar, fennel seeds, salt, and pepper. Bring just to a boil then reduce heat to medium-low and stir in cooked sausage. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are nearly tender, 10-15 minutes. Add kale; simmer until potatoes are soft and kale is tender, about 5-10 minutes. Stir in half and half and warm through. Remove excess fat from top of soup if desired. Serve topped with Romano cheese.

Crockpot version: Cook sausage, bacon, and onions as directed above. Add all ingredients through salt and pepper to crock pot. Add water if needed to cover potatoes. Cook on low 5-6 hours or on high 3-4 hours. Add kale and cream. Cover and cook on high 30 minutes. Garnish with cheese.