

Ribollita

Makes 6 main-dish servings

The Glorious Vegetables of Italy (Marchetti), p. 113

This Tuscan specialty is enjoyed year-round at my house. In warmer months, when hearty greens such as kale and cabbage are not in season I substitute fresh spinach leaves. Ribollita translates to “twice-boiled” and refers to the way the soup is cooked. First, the medley of vegetables is simmered in tomatoes and broth; then bread is added and the soup is brought to a second simmer to finish cooking. What this long-simmered soup lacks in vibrant color it more than makes up for in hearty flavor.

¼ CUP/60 ML EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, PLUS MORE FOR DRIZZLING

4 CLOVES GARLIC, LIGHTLY CRUSHED

8 OZ/225 G TUSCAN KALE (ALSO KNOWN AS DINOSAUR KALE), COARSELY SHREDDED

8 OZ/225 G SAVOY CABBAGE, COARSELY SHREDDED

½ TEASPOON FINE SEA SALT, OR TO TASTE

2 OZ/55 G PANCETTA, CUT INTO SMALL DICE

2 CARROTS, CUT INTO BITE-SIZE PIECES (ABOUT 1 CUP/225 G)

2 SMALL RIBS CELERY, CUT INTO BITE-SIZE PIECES (ABOUT ½ CUP/115 G)

½ CUP/2 OZ/55 G DICED RED OR YELLOW ONION

1 TBSP MINCED FRESH FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY

2 RED BLISS OR YUKON GOLD POTATOES, PEELED AND CUT INTO ½ -INCH/12 MM DICE

GENEROUS PINCH OF RED PEPPER FLAKES

1 14.5 OZ/415 G DICED CANNED TOMATOES

2 CUPS/450 G COOKED CANNELLINI BEANS OR CHICKPEAS, OR 1 (15 OZ/430 G) CAN CANNELLINI BEANS OR CHICKPEAS, PLUS THEIR LIQUID

4 CUPS/960 ML VEGETABLE BROTH (P. 62) OR BEST QUALITY COMMERCIAL CHICKEN BROTH

4 TO 6 CUPS/120 TO 200 G BREAD CROUTONS (SEE COOK’S NOTE, PAGE 107)*

In a large sauté pan, heat 3 tablespoons of the oil with 2 cloves of garlic over medium-low heat. Cook until the garlic is fragrant but not browned, about 3 minutes. Add the kale and cabbage in batches, covering the pan and letting the greens cook until they begin to wilt. Cook, stirring now and again, until the greens are wilted and tender, about 20 minutes. Season with the salt. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In a Dutch oven or other heavy-bottomed pot, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil over medium-low heat and add the pancetta. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the pancetta is lightly browned but not too crisp and has rendered its fat, 7 to 8 minutes. Add the carrots, celery, onion, and parsley and toss to coat well with the oil. Cook until the vegetables are shiny and beginning to soften, 7 to 8 minutes. Add the potatoes, toss, and cook until they begin to soften, about 10 minutes.

Stir in the wilted greens and sprinkle with red pepper flakes. Cook for about 5 minutes, until the greens are heated through. Pour in the tomatoes and the beans and stir to combine everything well. Add the vegetable broth and raise the heat to medium-high. Toss in the Parmigiano rind, if using. Bring the soup to a simmer, lower the heat to medium-low or low, and let the soup simmer until all the vegetables are cooked through and tender, about 30 minutes.

Add the bread croutons and stir them into the soup. Let simmer for another 15 to 20 minutes, until all of the ingredients have had a chance to meld. Taste and add additional salt if you like. Turn the heat off and cover the soup. Let it sit for just a few minutes to bring the flavors together.

Ladle the ribollita into shallow rimmed bowls and drizzle each serving with a little olive oil.

Cook's Note: To make bread croutons, spread 2 cups/60 g cubed Italian country bread on a rimmed baking sheet and drizzle 1-2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil over

them. Toss well with a wooden spoon or spatula. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper, if you like, and toss again. Spread the bread cubes out on a single layer. Bake at 400F/200C/gas 6 for 15 to 20 minutes, or until they are evenly brown and crisp. Let cool before using.