

Olga's Vegetable Soup

This recipe was adapted from a recipe from Men's Health Magazine (October 2008). It is utterly simple to prepare, extremely satisfying, and loaded with vitamins, fiber and antioxidants.

- ¾ cup olive oil
 - 2 yellow onions, peeled and chopped
 - 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
 - 2 celery stalks, chopped
 - Sea salt & pepper, to taste
 - 1 bunch of parsley, washed and chopped (thick stems discarded)
 - 2 or 3 cabbage leaves, chopped
 - 1 bunch chard, washed and chopped (thick stems discarded)
 - ¼ cup tomato paste
 - 3-4 cups cooked white beans (like canned cannellini or Great Northern beans)
 - 2-3 raw mild Italian sausages (chicken, turkey or pork), casing removed (optional)
1. Put ¼ cup of the olive oil in the bottom of a deep pot over medium heat (preferably cast iron). Add half of the chopped onions, carrots and celery, and cook, stirring occasionally, until they soften (about 10 minutes).
 2. Add another ¼ cup of oil and repeat the process, seasoning with salt and pepper as you go.
 3. Add the rest of the oil with the parsley, cabbage and chard, and cook, stirring occasionally, until everything is softened but not browned.
 4. Add the tomato paste and stir. Partially mash the beans, leaving some of them more or less whole. Add them to the pot along with enough water to make the mixture stewy but not too watery (about a cup or so of water).
 5. Keep cooking, tasting and seasoning with salt & pepper until all the vegetables are very tender and the soup is hot.
 6. While soup is cooking, heat a separate pan on medium heat, coat pan with olive oil and add sausage, breaking it apart with a spatula as it cooks. Cook until sausage is at least half-way cooked through.
 7. Add sausage to the soup and continue to cook so that all flavors blend and the sausage cooks through, at least 10 more minutes.
 8. Serve hot or warm.