

Dan Ralston's Kitchen

Tortellini Soup

Serves; A bunch

This is Danielle's favorite dish (Ali likes it too.) She always requested that I prepare this for her birthday dinners, or when she was allowed to have a bunch of friends over, like her soccer team. This recipe will serve a girl's soccer team if you also serve crusty bread and a salad. This is a hardy, full flavored soup that is especially good on a cold winter evening. The recipe may look daunting in its length, but it is actually very simple.

¼ plus 2 TBS. Cup Olive oil

1 Yellow Onion, Finely Chopped

3 Cloves Garlic, Minced

1 Large Carrot, Finely Chopped

2 Stalks Celery, Finely Chopped

2 32 oz Boxes Beef Stock

1 28 Oz. Can Contadina Crushed Tomatoes with Puree

1 – 14 1/2 Oz. Can Contadina Diced Tomatoes in Juice

1 Bottle good, spicy, Red Wine (Chianti, Zinfandel, Sangiovese or Shiraz.)

2 Bay Leaves

½ tsp. Dried Italian Seasoning Mix

A Pinch or 2 of Sugar

Salt & Pepper to Taste (canned beef broth tends to be salty so make sure you taste before adding more salt.)

4 Packs of Fresh Contadina Cheese Tortellini

1 Cup Freshly Grated Imported Parmesan Cheese (or domestic cheese if you must; but *Fresh; not that sawdust in a green can!*)

Use a large stock pot or Dutch oven with a lid. Pour the olive oil into the pot and heat over medium high until hot, but not smoking. Add the onion, garlic, carrot and celery. Turn the heat down to medium and “sweat” vegetables, stirring often with a wooden spoon, for about 5-6 minutes, or until the onion is soft. Don't let the vegetables brown! Add the beef broth, the crushed tomatoes, the diced tomatoes, the wine, the bay leaves

and the Italian seasoning. Bring to a boil then reduce the heat to a very low simmer. The broth should just have 2 or 3 little circles of bubbling slowly coming to the surface. Partially cover with the lid (leave the lid ajar so that there is about a ½ inch opening on one half of the circumference of the pot.) Now you can go watch a football game or golf match on TV (since I have an under the cupboard TV in my kitchen's cooks' corner, I have already been doing that while I cooked!) or read the Sunday paper. Let the broth simmer for at least 2 hours. You can prepare this dish to this point a day ahead of time if you want, let cool completely then cover and refrigerate the broth until ready to resume. Many dishes like this actually benefit from a day in the fridge before finishing; the flavors meld and become more complex.

Now taste the broth. I have found that canned tomato products are never sweet enough for my taste, that is why I always want to add a pinch (literally the amount you can pick up from the jar between your thumb and forefinger) of sugar. Stir a pinch in and taste again, add more if you need to. Do the same with the salt and pepper.

Just minutes from when you want to serve the soup, return the broth to a boil. Once you have a roiling boil going, add the tortellini. Cook according to the package instructions for "Al Dente," usually 5-10 minutes (Al Dente is Italian and means the pasta should be "firm to the tooth," or in Ohio words; we don't want to serve soggy noodles! So don't over cook the tortellini.)

Ladle the finished soup into warm bowls and serve with the parmesan cheese as a garnish. Make sure the bread you serve with it is crusty enough for sopping up what broth is left in the bowls.

For the adults, serve with a red wine similar to the one you cooked with.

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