

Minestrone with Basil Pesto

There are so many minestrone recipes out there.

What sets this recipe apart is that it doesn't use pasta, and yes, not all regions use pasta in their minestrone, so that doesn't make it really different either.

But what does make it different is the choice of veggies, and using Freekeh in it makes it lovely and chewy, and the addition of chicory gives it a slightly bitter taste. Then the basil pesto sweetens it up, so it becomes fabulously delicious and complex in flavour.

I seriously can't wait to make this again.

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp olive oil

1 large onion diced fine

4 cloves garlic minced

3 bay leaves

salt and black pepper to taste

600g finely chopped tomatoes

1 chilli finely cut (optional)

3 tsp dried Italian herbs

3 celery stalks sliced finely

1 carrot diced 1 cm pieces

1 fennel bulb (if not in season, use celeriac or turnip)

1 zucchini

6 cups water or stock (I always use water)

2 cups of green beans, cut small, or Brussels sprouts quartered

240g cooked cannellini beans

1/3 cup freekeh (or millet for gluten free)

A big handful of chicory washed well and sliced finely

For the pesto

1/2 cup pine nuts

1 cup basil or more to your liking

1/2 tsp salt

1 glug olive oil

METHOD

1. Place the oil, onions, celery, garlic, bay leaves, salt, pepper, chilli and Italian herbs in a saucepan and fry on a medium heat for 3- 5 minutes.

2. Next add the tomatoes and simmer for 5 minutes. Then add the carrots and water or stock and cook for 5 minutes then add the fennel and green beans or brussels and cook for 5 minutes.
3. Next add the zucchini and cannellini beans and chicory and cook for 5 to 8 minutes.
4. While the soup is cooking dry fry the freekeh in a saucepan until it browns slightly the place 2 cups of boiling water in the saucepan with ½ tsp salt and cook for 10 to 15 minutes or until the instructions on the packet tell you too. Strain when cooked.
5. Make the pesto by dry frying the pine nuts until slightly brown. Adding to a food processor with the washed basil, a big glug of olive oil, a squeeze of lime and some salt and process until fine.
6. Add the cooked freekeh to the soup and warm through. Ladle the soup into bowls and top each bowl with a generous amount of pesto.