

Ann's Flexible Minestrone Soup

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INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon Canola Oil
- 1 large Onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons minced Garlic
- Red and Green Bell Peppers, 1 each, chopped
- 2-3 medium Potatoes, cut into medium dice – Your choice whether to peel the potatoes or not. I typically do not.
- 4-6 cups Stock of your choice – could be chicken, vegetable, beef. I made turkey stock from saved/frozen turkey carcasses that were roasted last fall. Homemade stock tastes best, but canned or boxed stock or broth is fine too.
- 3-4 cups Beans of your choice – Use at least two different kinds, I had garbanzos and black beans this time, although for minestrone it would traditionally be kidney beans and maybe cannellinis. I prefer to use dried beans, soaking them overnight before adding them to the soup (may need to increase cooking time until the beans get tender) but frequently take the time-saving shortcut of canned beans. Just be sure to rinse them well before adding to the soup.
- 1 cup Vegetables of your choice – I added leftover green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces. Frozen vegetables can be convenient here. Zucchini? Carrots? Yes and yes.
- 1 28-ounce can whole tomatoes
- Fresh herbs of your choice – Oregano, basil and/or thyme are good choices.
- 2 ounces small pasta such as Ditalini
- Grated parmesan cheese for garnish – optional but OMG yes!

DIRECTIONS:

- Heat the oil over medium heat in a large, heavy pot. Add onions and a pinch of salt, stir, and let them soften – approximately 5 minutes.
- Add the garlic, and stir for 30 seconds before adding the peppers. Stir again and let peppers soften for 3-4 minutes.
- Add the potatoes, another generous pinch of salt, stir, left soften for 3-4 minutes.
- Add the stock. Eyeball the right amount, based on the quantity of your add-ins. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer.

- Add vegetables and tomatoes – use your hands to break up the tomatoes as they go into the pot. Add the tomato liquid from the can too.
- Make a bouquet garni with the herbs wrapped in a piece of cheesecloth, tied off at the ends. Drop this into the soup to add flavor without adding chopped herbs.
- Simmer the soup over very low heat, partially covered, for 30 minutes. Then skim the foam and any impurities from the top of the soup when it's nearly done. Remove the bouquet garni from the soup after @ 30 minutes.
- Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to package directions. It should be al dente, not overly soft. Drain and rinse in cold water to halt the cooking.
- Add cooked pasta into soup. Taste and adjust for seasonings with additional salt and pepper as needed.
- Let soup sit, covered, off the heat, for about 10 minutes to let the flavors blend before serving.
- Serve with a sprinkling of parmesan cheese, if desired.