

Spring Minestrone with garlic croutons

Swick

Makes 9 cups | Active Time: 35 minutes | Total Time: 35 minutes

Chef's Notes

Suggested adult serving: 3 cups

Store any leftover soup in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Fennel Bulb: Fennel is a bulbous vegetable topped with green fronds that resemble dill. The bulb is firm, crunchy, and tastes faintly of licorice. Fennel can be thinly sliced for a salad or halved and grilled until tender.

Step 1: Make the Soup & Croutons

- 4 1/2 cloves garlic minced (divided) (≈1 1/2 tablespoons)

- 1 1/4 teaspoons Italian seasoning (divided)

- 3 slices whole-grain bread cubed

- 3/4 fennel bulb cored, thinly sliced & chopped (≈2 1/4 cups)

- 3/4 yellow onion chopped (≈3/4 cup)

- 4 1/2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth

- 3/4 teaspoon dried tarragon

- 1/3 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

- 12 oz asparagus cut into bite-size pieces

- 2 1/4 oz spinach stemmed & coarsely chopped (≈3 cups)

- freshly ground black pepper

- sea salt

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

MAKE CROUTONS

In a medium bowl, stir together 1 1/2 teaspoons garlic, 1/3 teaspoon Italian seasoning, and 1 1/2 tablespoons water.

Add bread cubes to garlic seasoning and toss to coat.

Place bread cubes on a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake until crisp and browned, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

SAUTÉ VEGETABLES

In a stockpot over medium heat, cook fennel, onions, and remaining garlic, stirring occasionally, until onions start to turn translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Add vegetable broth 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time as needed, to keep vegetables from sticking.

SIMMER SOUP

Add remaining vegetable broth, navy beans, remaining Italian seasoning, tarragon, and pepper flakes (if using) to pot. Increase heat to high and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until vegetables are very tender, 5 minutes.

STEAM ASPARAGUS

Meanwhile, in a steamer insert set over boiling water, steam asparagus until just tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

FINISH SOUP

Stir spinach into soup until it has just wilted. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

SERVE

Portion asparagus into bowls and top with soup. Serve with garlic croutons.