

Winter Minestrone with Sausage and Kale

When my husband wants soup, he doesn't usually demand a certain kind. He says something vague, like, "I'm envisioning something bubbling for hours on the back of the stove." Me? I don't much care for simmering things on the back burner. (Nobody puts baby in a corner.) No, I like my soups up front, where they're easy to reach, and their scents have a shorter direct path to the ol' sniffer.

Here's a soup that capitalizes on winter produce. In Seattle, you can buy almost all the ingredients—including the beans, sausage, and chicken broth—from local farmers' markets. For a truly local soup, skip the tomatoes and add a splash of vinegar for acid.

Serve the soup with grated Parmesan cheese and good, crusty bread.

TIME: 1 hour active time

MAKES: 8 servings

1 pound sweet (or hot) Italian sausage, casings removed, torn into bite-sized pieces
2 tablespoons olive oil or butter
1 large onion, chopped
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1/2 pound carrots (3 large), cut into 1" pieces
1/2 pound parsnips (2 large), cut into 1" half moons
3 celery sticks, cut into 1/2" pieces
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary (or 1 teaspoon dried)
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme (or 1/4 teaspoon dried)
1 cup red wine, such as Sangiovese
8 cups chicken broth
1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes
1 1/2 cups dried cranberry or cannellini beans, soaked overnight (or 2 cans), drained
1 (1/2 pound) bunch kale, rinsed and cut into 1" pieces

In a large, heavy-bottomed soup pot, cook the sausage on medium heat until browned, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

Add the olive oil to the pot, then the onion, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring frequently, until the onions begin to caramelize, about 15 minutes. Add the carrots, parsnips, and celery, and cook and stir for 5 minutes. Add the garlic, rosemary, and thyme, season again with salt and pepper, and cook for about a minute. Add the wine, bring to a simmer, and cook, scraping any brown bits off the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon, until the wine has almost evaporated. Add the broth, tomatoes, beans, and reserved sausage, bring to a boil, then simmer at least 1 hour and up to 3 hours, partially covered. Add kale, and cook 30 minutes more.

Season to taste, and serve hot.