

MINESTRONE

SERVES 6-8



MANY regions of Italy have a version of this imposing vegetable soup. In Genoa, the source of this recipe, minestrone was traditionally

served from boats in the harbor to vegetable-starved sailors whose ships had just arrived. The use of pesto is a particularly Genoese touch.

FOR THE SOUP:

1 oz. dried porcini
 ¼ lb. swiss chard, washed and trimmed
 ¼ lb. spinach, washed and trimmed
 Salt
 2 small zucchini, diced
 2 medium white potatoes, peeled and diced
 2 Japanese eggplants, peeled and diced
 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
 2 cups tubetti pasta
 2 cups cooked white beans
 Freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE PESTO:

2 tbsp. pine nuts
 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
 ½ tsp. salt
 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves
 ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 3 tbsp. grated parmigiano-reggiano

1. For the soup: Soak porcini in 2 cups warm water in a bowl until soft, about 20 minutes. Remove porcini, rinse, chop, and set aside. Strain porcini water through a coffee filter and reserve. Chop chard and spinach.

2. Bring porcini water and 6 cups salted water to a boil in a large pot. Add porcini, chard, spinach, zucchini, potatoes, eggplant, and oil. Reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 1 hour.

3. For the pesto: Put pine nuts, garlic, and salt into a food processor and blend to a paste. Add basil, drizzle in olive oil, and process until smooth. Transfer to a bowl and stir in parmigiano.

4. Add pasta to soup. Cook pasta for about 10 minutes, then add beans and cook for 5 minutes more. Stir 2-3 tbsp. of the pesto into the soup; serve the rest at the table or reserve it for another use. Season soup with salt and pepper. Serve hot or at room temperature, sprinkled with additional grated parmigiano, if you like.