**Tuscan White Bean Soup**  
Warm and wonderful soup is perfect for a wild and windy winter day. Enjoy!  
Serves 6-8

1 pound sweet Italian sausage (chicken or pork or a mixture), casings removed  
Olive oil  
1 large onion, chopped  
1 large leek, chopped  
3 carrots, chopped  
3 stalks celery, chopped  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper  
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
2 1/2 – 3 cups cooked small white or cannellini beans  
3-4 quarts chicken broth (more or less depending on how thick you want your soup)  
1/2 cup dry white wine  
1 piece Parmigiano-Reggiano rind about 2-inches by 3-inches (optional)  
1 bay leaf  
1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary  
1 head escarole, chopped or 1 pound fresh baby spinach

Heat a soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the sausage, breaking up the meat into bite-size pieces, cook until brown about 5 minutes.  Remove the sausage from the pan, drain the fat and reserve.

Heat a little olive oil in the pot and add the onion, leek, carrots and celery and season with salt and pepper. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally until the onion is translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes more.

Add the beans, sausage, broth, white wine, Parmigiano-Reggiano rind, bay leaf and rosemary to the soup pot with the vegetables. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer for about 20 minutes. Stir in the escarole and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the greens wilt, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

While adding a piece of Parmigiano-Reggiano rind to the pot is optional, it will add wonderful flavor and richness to your soup. I keep a re-sealable plastic bag of rinds in the freezer.

Like most soups, this one is best if made 1 or 2 days ahead. Cool completely and store in the refrigerator.