**MINESTRONE SOUP**

Makes 10 cups, Serving 6 to 8

Tasty and healthy you may add a little more zing. Used spicy sausage instead of pancetta and seasoned with fennel seeds, sage and fresh basil with a touch of balsamic vinegar.

**INGREDIENTS:**

1. 1/.2 pound (about 1-1/4 cups) diced white beans such as Great Northern, picked over and rinsed)
2. ½ Tsp. salt
3. ¼ pounds pancetta (Italian cured pork belly, available at Italian markets) or sliced or chopped diced lean bacon.
4. 1/3 cup olive oil
5. 1 onion chopped
6. 1 large carrot, cut into ½-inch dice
7. 1 rib celery, cut into ½-inch dice
8. 3 garlic cloves, chopped fine
9. 2 zucchini, scrubbed and cut into ½-inch dice
10. ¼ pounds green beans, trimmed and cut into ½-inch pieces
11. ½ pound boiling potatoes
12. 4 cups shredded green cabbage (preferably Savoy)
13. ½ pound kale, rinsed, drained, stems discarded and leaves chopped (about 6 cups)
14. 1-28 oz. can tomatoes, chopped coarse and drained well
15. 4-1/2 cups chicken broth (preferably low-salt)
16. Fresh grated Parmesan , and dry cured sausage as accompaniments

**DIRECTIONS:**

In large bowl let the white beans soak in enough water to cover them by 2 inches overnight or quick-soak them. Drain the white beans, in a saucepan and combine them with enough water to cover by 2 inches, and simmer them, uncovered, adding more water if necessary to keep them barely covered, for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until they are tender. Add the salt and simmer the white beans for 5 minutes more. Remove the pan from the heat and let the white beans stand, uncovered.

In a heavy kettle cook the pancetta in the oil moderate heat, stirring, until it is crisp and pale golden, add the onion, and cook the mixture, stirring, until the onion is softened. Add the carrots, the celery, and the garlic and cook the mixture, stirring, for 4 minutes. Add the zucchini, the green beans, and the potatoes, peeled and cut into ¾-inch dice, and cook the mixture, stirring for 4 minutes. Add the cabbage and the kale and cook the mixture, stirring, until the cabbage is wilted. Add the tomatoes and the broth and simmer the soup, covered, for 1 hour.

Drain the white beans, reserving the liquid, in a blender or food processor puree half of them with 1 cup of reserved liquid, and season the puree and the remaining white beans into the soup. Simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes, thin it if desired with some of the remaining reserve liquid, and season it with salt and pepper. The soup may be made 3 days in advance and kept covered and chilled. Reheat the soup, thinning it with water as desired. Serve the soup with Parmesan, the bruschetta, and the sausage.