

WHAT'S COOKING BY KATHY HARRISON



Souper Bowl

KATHY HARRISON TAKES ONE FOR THE TEAM

FOR THE PAST several years, I've been invited to a Super Bowl party at a friend's apartment. Several couples have been attending this bash for years.

His invitation reads "Come for Super Bolognese". He shared his pasta recipe, which I slavishly followed. His sauce is great; mine...not so. He's Italian; I'm not. That must be the difference. I think a great sauce must run in his ancestry going back generations.

This year, he's taking his family away for the big day. He's turned the task to me. What? WHAT? I can't do it, I whined. Your Bolognese is rich, thick, redolent with garlic and herbs. Mine is a puny imitation. Yet, the gauntlet was thrown. I had to take one for the team.

Soup runs through my family tree. Chicken soup cured our colds since my brother and I were kids. My mother lured me out of my bedroom with tomato soup and a grilled cheese sandwich when I barricaded myself after my 8th grade boyfriend and I broke up. (He asked Geraldine to the graduation party.)

Soup is wonderful to have on hand for a party. Especially one in winter, when the word mild just means that the wind isn't knocking you over and the sun has made a brief appearance. There's no reason to wait for the Super Bowl to have a Souper Bowl. How about a Souper Monday or Tuesday? My invitation reads "Come for Souper Bowl. It's going to be Salada Fun." I'm serving this marvelous soup and a Caesar salad. Everything can be made in advance, so I won't have to be tucked away in the kitchen when (hopefully), The Bears run onto the field. ☺



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Pasta e Fagioli Soup

INGREDIENTS:

3 Tbs. olive oil, plus more if necessary
2 ribs celery, finely chopped
2 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
½ red onion, finely chopped
1 dry red chile
Kosher salt
2 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced
3 sprigs rosemary, needles finely chopped
1 small can whole tomatoes, drained
2 cans cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
2 cups chicken or vegetable stock, adjust as needed
6 ounces dried ditalini pasta, or other small tubular pasta
Grated Parmesan cheese
Freshly ground black pepper
Finishing type olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Warm the olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the celery, carrots, onion, and dried chile. Sprinkle lightly with salt and cook slowly until the vegetables are extremely soft. (Don't rush this step.) Stir frequently and add more olive oil if the mixture looks dry.
2. Add the garlic and rosemary, stirring to combine. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until the garlic is golden, but not at all burnt.
3. Crush the tomatoes with your hands or a potato masher and add to the vegetables. Cook, stirring frequently until the mixture is soft and turns a beautiful brick red, about 10-15 minutes. Add the beans to the pot, stirring to combine with the vegetables. Add enough chicken or vegetable stock to cover the vegetables by 1 inch. Raise the heat to medium and bring the contents to a simmer. Slowly simmer for about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat.
4. Transfer ¼ of the bean mixture to a food processor and puree until smooth, then stir the puree back into the saucepan of vegetables. Heat gently, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes. Taste and add salt as needed. (The mixture may be made a day or 2 in advance.) Keep warm while finishing the soup.
5. When ready to serve, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook 3-4 minutes short of the recommended time on the package. (The pasta will finish cooking with the beans.) With a slotted spoon, add the pasta to the pot of vegetables. Reserve the pasta cooking water.
6. Increase the heat under the vegetable/pasta mixture and bring to a boil. Cook until the pasta is al dente, the remaining 3-4 minutes. If the soup is too thick, add the reserved pasta cooking water by ladlefuls until the soup is creamy and just loose. Taste and add more salt and freshly ground black pepper as needed.
7. Ladle soup into bowls and dust with Parmesan and a drizzle of olive oil. Serve hot. Serves 4-6