

Rustic Butternut Squash and Cannellini Bean Soup

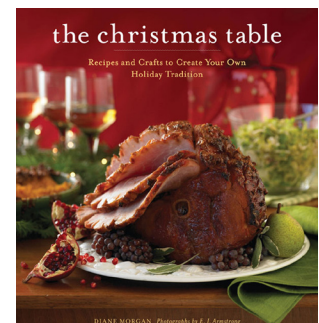
With all the heavy eating and entertaining around the holidays, I need to have a hearty, vegetable-packed soup on hand after the holidays as a digestive break from the rich foods, meats, and sweets. This is the thick, rustic soup I make. If I'm organized, I make this soup on a quiet Sunday, eating half of it for dinner and freezing the rest for a quick weeknight meal. Pass a bowlful of freshly grated Parmesan cheese as a generous garnish for the soup. Serve a loaf of crusty bread and a salad of spicy winter greens, such as the Radicchio Caesar Salad featured on page 63 in my newest cookbook, *The Christmas Table*.



Recipe picture

Ingredients:

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 large cloves garlic, minced
2 leeks, white and light green part only, cut into thin slices
2 large carrots, peeled, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch thick slices
3 ribs celery, trimmed, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1/4-inch thick slices
6 cups homemade chicken stock or canned low-sodium chicken broth
1 can (14.5 ounce) peeled, diced tomatoes in juice
1 1/2 cups peeled, seeded, and chopped butternut squash
1 can (15 ounce) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
1/2 cup small dried macaroni, such as elbows or shells
2 small zucchini, cut into 1/2 inch dice
1 red bell pepper, seeded, deribbed, and cut into 1/2 inch dice
1 package (9 ounces) frozen Italian green beans, thawed (see Cook's Note)
1/2 cup minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
Kosher or sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons basil pesto, homemade or store-bought, at room temperature
3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, preferably Parmigiano-Reggiano



From: *The Christmas Table*
Recipes and Crafts to Create Your Own
Holiday Tradition
By Diane Morgan

In a 6-quart stockpot, heat the oil and garlic over medium heat, and allow the garlic to simmer in the oil until fragrant but not brown, about 1 minute. Add the leeks, carrots, and celery and sauté, partially covered, until crisp-tender but not brown, about 5 minutes. Add the chicken stock or broth and tomatoes, plus the juice from the can. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the winter squash, cannellini beans, and macaroni. Continue to cook, partially covered, 10 minutes longer. Add the zucchini, bell pepper, and green beans.

Continue to cook until the squash is fork-tender and the macaroni is al dente, about 10 minutes longer. (The soup can be made up to this point and refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen up to 2 weeks).

Remove from the heat and add the parsley and pesto, stirring to distribute well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve hot, passing parmesan cheese to sprinkle on top.

Servers 8

Cook's Note

If you can't find frozen Italian green beans, which are wider than regular green beans, use cut green beans instead. Do not, however, use French-cut green beans because they will cook away. You can, of course, use fresh green beans if they are reasonably priced and tender, though winter isn't generally the best time of year to be buying fresh green beans.