

Hearty Vegetable Bean Soup

As soon as the outside temperature dips below 50 degrees, I can't wait to make this vegetarian soup, which is ready in about half an hour. What goes into it is usually determined by the contents of my refrigerator: onions, leeks, scallions, carrots, celery, and salad greens are all good. Canned beans make it sturdy enough for a main course.

For a comforting lunch or dinner, serve with grated Gruyère on top and chunks of country bread as an accompaniment.

4 Servings (About 6 Cups)

- 4 cups water
- 1 medium leek, split, washed, trimmed (retaining most of the green), and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (about 2 1/2 cups)
- 1 cup peeled and diced (1/2-inch) carrot
- 1 cup peeled and diced (1/2-inch) white turnip
- 1 cup diced (1/2-inch) celery
- 2 tablespoons good olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 can (15.5 ounces) cannellini beans
- 1 cup grated Gruyère cheese, preferably an aged variety
- Pieces of baguette or sturdy country bread
- 4 sprigs fresh parsley, for garnish (optional)

Combine the water, leek, carrot, turnip, celery, oil, and salt in a large saucepan or pot. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce the heat to low, and boil gently for about 12 minutes. Add the beans, including the liquid, and bring to a boil again. Boil for a few minutes. Serve in bowls with a generous sprinkling of grated Gruyère and a parsley sprig (if desired) on top and bread alongside.