



Add flavor and texture to your soup with some grated Parmesan cheese.

JAN O'LEARY, DORLING KINDERSLEY/GETTY IMAGES

Make mine minestrone!

Serve up smiles all year long with this classic zesty Italian soup.

A WARM, HEARTY BOWL of minestrone makes a perfect winter meal. But if you modify the traditional recipe, you also can enjoy this satisfying soup in spring, summer and fall. Here's an easy, go-to formula with simple variations to add seasonal flavors. Top it off with a little grated Parmesan cheese, if you'd like, then grab your spoon and dig in.

Easy Minestrone Soup with seasonal twists

- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 each: large onion, celery stalk and peeled carrot, cut into small dice
- 2 tsps. Italian seasoning
- ¼ to ½ tsp. hot red pepper flakes
- 2 quarts vegetable broth
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes
- 2 cans (15 or 16 ounces each) small white beans, undrained
- 1 cup ditalini or other small, tubular pasta
- 1 pound seasonal vegetables (see variations at right)
- Salt and black ground pepper
- Optional: Parmesan cheese



See nutrition information for each season's minestrone at usaweekend.com

Heat oil over medium-high heat in a large pot. Add onions, celery and carrots; sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Add Italian seasoning and red pepper flakes; sauté until fragrant, about a minute longer. Add remaining ingredients. Cover and bring to a simmer.

Reduce heat to medium-low; continue to simmer, partially covered and stirring occasionally, until vegetables are soft and pasta is tender, about 15 minutes longer. Adjust seasonings, including salt and pepper, to taste.

Serves 8.

Winter vegetables: about 8 ounces each of butternut squash, cut into medium dice, and shredded savoy cabbage

Spring vegetables: about 8 ounces each of frozen green peas and coarsely chopped escarole

Summer vegetables: about 8 ounces each of zucchini, cut into medium dice, and factory-washed spinach, stemmed and coarsely chopped

Fall vegetables: about 8 ounces each of bite-sized cauliflower florets and broccoli rabe, trimmed and coarsely chopped



Contributing Editor PAM ANDERSON blogs at threemanycooks.com, which she writes with her daughters. She is the author of five cookbooks.