

Minestrone soup / stew

This is always good time to start increasing the amount of vegetables which we eat.

A satisfying Minestrone soup / stew can help boost your 5 a day and also use up all those odds and ends that accumulate in the vegetable drawer of the fridge.

The ingredients can vary depending on what you have to hand — this is just a guide.

Olive oil
1 onion finely chopped
1 leek finely sliced
5 small carrots finely chopped
6 small potatoes peeled and quartered
¼ cauliflower as small florets
6 – 8 mushrooms quartered
1 carton chopped tomatoes
1 litre stock of choice (veg, chicken or bacon)
A good bunch of herbs — [Bay leaves](#), [Thyme](#) and [oregano](#)
Can of cannellini beans (or you can soak and cook your own)
Handful of green beans cut into 2cm lengths
A good handful of soup pasta (or rice)
Seasoning and grated parmesan to serve



Method:

- Heat a glug of olive oil in a heavy based pan and fry the onion and leek gently until they just start to soften.
- Stir in the carrots, potatoes, cauliflower and mushrooms.
- Add the tomatoes, stock and herbs and leave to simmer very gently for about an hour.
- Add both sorts of beans and simmer for another 15 minutes then add the soup pasta or rice.

At this point you can add some pieces of cooked chicken, gammon or slices of cooked smoked sausage, but meat isn't necessary if you want a vegetarian feast.

When the pasta is cooked in about 10 minutes, taste and add pepper and salt to taste.

Some stock is quite salty so you may not need much salt.

Serve ladled into bowls with grated cheese to hand around and some nice crusty bread.