

Ratatouille

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Garlic, herbs, fresh produce and good quality olive oil cooked together create a lovely Mediterranean style dish. In this rendition, I've added beans which turn this vegetarian side into a main meal when served along with crusty bread or whole grain pasta. Leftovers taste even better the next day when flavors have had a chance to meld.

Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 1 (14-ounce can) diced tomato
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup basil, leaves chopped or torn
- ¼ cup parsley, leaves chopped
- Olive oil
- 1 eggplant, diced
- 1 zucchini, diced
- 1 green pepper, diced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans, rinsed & drained
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Garnish: parmesan and fresh basil

Instructions

1. Heat a large Dutch oven or heavy pot over medium heat with a tablespoon of olive oil. Add tomato, garlic, basil and parsley. Begin to simmer on low heat, partly covered.
2. Using a large, heavy skillet cook eggplant and zucchini in 1 tablespoon of olive oil and a pinch of salt (1/8 teaspoon), stirring occasionally, until tender (soft but not browned), about 10-minutes. Remove vegetables from skillet and add into simmering pot of tomatoes. Continue simmering.
3. Add green pepper and onion into the empty skillet with another tablespoon of oil and pinch of salt. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 10-minutes. Add them into simmering pot.
4. Add in cannellini beans.
5. Simmer all together for 30 minutes, partly covered. Stir occasionally.
6. Remove from heat. Add salt and pepper to taste. Allow to cool slightly prior to serving (best served warm or room temperature).
7. Garnish with parmesan cheese and fresh basil leaves if desired

Nutrition (per serving): 233 calories, 11 g fat, 1.5g sat.fat, 30g carbohydrate, 10.5g fiber 9g protein, 348mg sodium

Heather's Healthy Hints

- ✓ Draining and rinsing canned beans has been shown to decrease sodium by about 40%
- ✓ If you have the time, you can slash sodium by cooking your own tomatoes and beans rather than using canned.

- Tomatoes: You'll need about 1-pound fresh tomatoes. Using a pairing knife mark an "x" on the bottoms. Submerge tomatoes in a pot of boiling water until the skins start to peel off. Remove and run under cold water to slide skins off. Dice and use in the recipe.
- Cannellini: this requires soaking dried beans overnight followed by a 2 hour simmer in fresh water. Though this takes time, taste and texture is superior to canned and once cooked, beans can be frozen in their cooking liquid for future use, so cook a big batch and enjoy them in many meals.

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