

Soupe au Pistou

adapted from Paula Wolfert's article in *Food & Wine*, Aug. 2006



The pistou is what "makes" this. I made a few alterations to the original recipe - see **NOTES**.

- 1 cup white beans (dry) such as navy or cannellini, soaked in cold water overnight and drained
- 2 ounces pancetta
- 1 small onion, halved, plus 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, 2 whole and 2 smashed (for the Pistou)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 quarts water, plus 3 cups
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small fennel bulb, cored and coarsely chopped
- 10 ounces red potatoes, peeled and halved
- 1 pound zucchini, cut in half lengthwise, then into 1/2-inch pieces
- 3/4 pound green beans, or Romano beans, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 teaspoons Penzey's chicken soup base, or use some other brand of chicken concentrate
- 3 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and cut into 1/2-inch dice
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 cup pasta, small shaped pasta, such as elbows or ditalini (I used farfallini)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 pound chicken breast half without skin, cooked, chopped (or use left over roast chicken)
- Basil sprigs, for garnish

CLASSIC PISTOU:

- 1 tablespoon garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 1/2 cups basil leaves, torn into pieces, about 2 ounces
- 1/4 cup plum tomatoes, coarsely grated (yes, grated, leaving the skin behind)
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup Gouda cheese, aged, or Mimolette (about 3 ounces)

Servings: 6

My changes: I prepared the beans in a pressure cooker. They were extra flavorful. I'd definitely make these from scratch because of the great flavor from the onion, bay leaf, pancetta, etc. I added chicken soup concentrate to the water. I just thought it needed it. I also added CHICKEN pieces to this soup, which is very contrary to the original. I wanted a bit more protein in it. I also used less water, and my pot was almost overflowing so I chose not to add the bean cooking liquid. But if you make the beans from scratch that bean liquid is probably VERY flavorful.

1. Put the drained white beans, pancetta, halved onion, whole garlic cloves and bay leaf in a medium saucepan. Add the 3 cups of water and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover the saucepan and simmer until the beans are tender, about 1 1/2 hours. Discard the pancetta if desired (I didn't because it was in lots of small pieces), onion, garlic and bay leaf. (**PRESSURE COOKER:** soak beans overnight, drain, add about 4 cups water, along with pancetta, onion, garlic and bay leaf. Cook under pressure for about 13 minutes; allow to cool naturally. Drain, but reserve all the liquid - you can add it to the soup if desired - I didn't.)
2. Meanwhile, in a large, heavy pot, heat the olive oil. Add the fennel, potatoes, chopped onion and smashed garlic. Cover the pot and cook the vegetables over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until the fennel and onion are softened, about 10 minutes. Add the 1 1/2 quarts of water and the chicken soup base, and gradually bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes.
3. Add the zucchini and green beans to the pot and simmer for 20 minutes. Mash the potatoes against the side of the pot using a large fork; the potatoes will thicken the soup. Add the diced tomatoes and the white beans and their cooking liquid (if using) and simmer the soup over moderately low heat for 5 to 10 minutes.
4. In a small skillet, melt the butter. Add the pasta and cook over moderate heat until golden brown and toasty, about 4 minutes. Stir the pasta into the soup and simmer for 1 minute. Cover, remove from the heat and let stand until the pasta is tender, about 25 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Be careful - the cheese in the pistou is somewhat salty, but I found the soup did need a little bit of salt. Some chicken stock is very salty to begin with. Under-salt it at first. Be prepared to serve it immediately.
5. Put the Classic Pistou in a large soup tureen. Gradually stir in some of the liquid from the soup, then pour in the rest of the soup and stir well. Ladle the soup into bowls, garnish with basil sprigs and serve hot or at room temperature. You can also put a small spoon of the pistou into each soup bowl and ladle the soup over it. Stir the pistou into the soup.
5. **Make Ahead:** The soup can be prepared through Step 4 and refrigerated overnight. Reheat gently before proceeding.
6. **PISTOU** (I made this in the food processor): In a large mortar, pound the garlic with the salt to a paste. Add the basil by the handful and grind the leaves against the side of the mortar until almost smooth. Stir in the tomatoes, then gradually stir in the olive oil until it's incorporated. Stir in the cheese and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 517 Calories; 21g Fat (35.0% calories from fat); 29g Protein; 57g Carbohydrate; 11g Dietary Fiber; 51mg Cholesterol; 792mg Sodium. Exchanges: 3 Grain(Starch); 2 1/2 Lean Meat; 2 Vegetable; 3 1/2 Fat; 0 Other Carbohydrates.

Serving Ideas: This soup can be served hot, warm or even cold (it's traditional in France to serve it at all different temps).

Carolyn T's Blog - Tasting Spoons:
<http://tastingspoons.com>