

Cream of mushroom soup

Should make about 1½ litres

500g / 1lb mushrooms, sliced

90g / 3oz butter

2 medium onions, chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed

2 tablespoons plain flour

1 litre / 1.8 pints hot vegetable stock

1 bay leaf

½ cup / 4 tablespoons double cream

Juice of 1 lemon

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Melt the butter on a low heat and add the onions, leave to cook for 5 minutes.

Add the garlic, bay leaf and mushrooms, cover and cook for 10-15 minutes until they release their juice.

Sprinkle on the flour and stir to combine. Cook for a couple of minutes then pour in the stock. Cook for 20 minutes.

Add the lemon juice and pepper to taste then liquidise with a hand blender then stir in the cream.

Minestrone Soup

Should make about 2 litres

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| 3 tbsp oil | 2tsp fresh, or dried thyme leaves |
| 2 carrots, diced | 400g x 1 tins chopped tomatoes |
| 1 onions, diced | 2tbsp tomato purée |
| 1 sticks celery, diced | 1.2 litres of stock |
| 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped | 400g x 1 tin cannellini beans |
| 200g potatoes, peeled and cubed | 70g small pasta e.g. macaroni or broken spaghetti |
| 40g savoy cabbage, finely shredded | 3½tbsp chopped parsley |
| 1 bay leaf | Salt and black pepper |

In a large-ish pan, warm the oil then add the carrot, onion and celery, cook for about 10 minutes, until soft.

Add garlic, potatoes and thyme and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring to stop the potato from sticking.

Add the tomatoes, purée, stock and a pinch of salt and simmer, partially covered, for 20 minutes.

Add the pasta and simmer for 20 minutes adding the cabbage and beans after 15 minutes.

Add more stock if it looks a bit thick. Taste and season and stir in the parsley.

Notes:

Different vegetables can be used depending on the time of year, such as courgettes or peppers and fresh tomatoes in the summer.

A richer flavoured soup can be made by adding the hard end of a piece of parmesan to the soup with the stock and taking it out at the end of cooking.