

Pasta and Bean Potage

This is a variation on Italian Pasta e Fagioli. Besides lending rich flavor, seitan adds plenty of protein to enhance that of the beans. In winter, serve it thick, but in spring and summer, more liquid, more and lighter vegetables such as fresh corn and zucchini, less beans, and the use of fresh herbs makes a lighter, more appropriate version.

Wash beans, cover with fresh water, and let soak 8-12 hours. Drain, and combine with the water and 1 clove of the garlic in a large pot. Bring to a boil, lower heat, and simmer, covered, until beans are just tender (about 2 hours), adding more water if needed to keep beans covered. When tender, add salt, bay leaf, and, if desired, spaghetti sauce and continue simmering.

Meanwhile, sauté remaining garlic and onion in olive oil over low heat. Add carrots, celery, cabbage, and salt, and sauté briefly. Add water to cover and simmer 5-10 minutes. Add vegetables to beans and cook together 5 minutes. Add pasta along with the seitan and simmer until pasta is al dente, stirring occasionally and adding more water if needed to prevent pasta from sticking. Add the herbs for the last minute of cooking. Add more salt or soy sauce to taste, if needed. Serve hot.

Preparation List:

Serves 8

- 2 cups pinto beans
- 9 cups water
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 large bay leaf, broken into 2-3 pieces
- ¼-1/3 cup spaghetti sauce (optional)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 2 onions, diced
- 3 carrots, diced
- 2 ribs celery, sliced
- 1/6 head cabbage, sliced crosswise into thin strips
- pinch sea salt
- 2 cups pasta shells or elbows
- 2 cups seitan, cut into bite-size chunks
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped, or ½ teaspoon dried
- ½ tablespoon fresh marjoram or oregano, chopped, or ¼ teaspoon dried