

Christmas Eve Soup

We make this soup every year on Christmas Eve. The girls call it Italian Wedding Soup, but its real name is just Sicilian Soup with Sausage (Zuppa di salaticcia alla Siciliana).

I follow the instructions up to item 9- I make the soup about 3 or 4 hours before we eat so I can drop the orzo in, turn the heat off, and cover the soup and let it sit on the stovetop for a couple of hours. Then I reheat the soup and serve with Park Ave Bakery Rustic Italian bread. Ciabatta is good if you're looking for a less dense bread.

Ingredients:

- 1 tsp Olive Oil
- 1 lb sweet Italian Sausage
- 1 large sweet onion diced small
- 3 large carrots sliced thin
- 2-4 celery ribs with leaves, sliced thin
- 1 can (28 ounces) Italian plum tomatoes save juice, chop tomatoes
- 1/4 cup Flat-leaved parsley, finely chopped
- 2 Tbl fresh basil, finely chopped (if dried, 1 Tbl)
- 5 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup orzo
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano (parmesan will work in a pinch)

Optional

- 1/8 tsp lightly crushed fennel seeds, if your sausage does not have fennel, this adds a necessary flavor.
- 1 tsp sugar, use only if needed to reduce tomato tartness

Instructions:

1. Heat the oil in a large soup pot
2. Add sausage, onion and fennel seed if using. Sauté about 10 minutes - until the sausage is browned
3. Add celery and carrots and sauté for another 5 mins or so. Drain excess fat if you must.
4. Add tomatoes and their juice, parsley, and basil and stir everything together.
5. Add broth
6. Bring to a boil over medium heat, then reduce to simmer for another 10 mins until the veggies are tender
7. Taste the broth- if it is too tart, add a tsp of sugar to reduce the bite. Stir and taste again
8. Add salt and pepper (to taste)
9. Add orzo and cook on low heat, covered, for about 10 mins until pasta is al dente
10. Serve with fresh grated Romano sprinkled on top

Note: I believe all recipes are just guidelines. If you love fennel add a bit more; hate it? Leave it out! I always use the heart of the celery rather than large, outer ribs so I get a lot of celery leaves- I think they have a nice, flavorful bite. I also quarter the carrots if they are large in diameter. There is no garlic in this recipe, but I have added it in the past. It should be used sparingly to keep close to the intended character of the soup.