

# Soupe au Pistou

6 to 8 servings

Happy Mother's Day 2009!

## Provençal Vegetable soupe with Garlice, Basil and Herbs,

Early summer is the Mediterranean season for soup au pistou, when fresh basil, fresh white beans, and broad mange-tout beans are all suddenly available, and the market women shout in the streets, "*Mesdames, faites les bon piste, faites le pistou!*" The *pistou* itself, like the Italian *pesta*, is a sauce made of garlic, basil, tomato and cheese, and is just as good on spaghetti as it is in this rich vegetable soup. Fortunately, this soup is not confined to summer and fresh vegetables, for you can use canned navy beans or kidney beans, fresh or frozen string beans, and a fragrant dried basil. Other vegetables in season may be added with the green beans as you wish, such as peas, diced zucchini, and green or red bell peppers.

### Ingredients for the soup:

3 quarts water (or homemade chicken broth)  
2 cups diced potatoes  
2 cups diced carrots  
2 cups diced onion or white of leek  
1 tablespoon salt

2 cups diced green beans  
2 cups cooked or canned navy,  
kidney or cannellini beans  
1/3 cup broken spaghetti  
1 slice stale white bread, crumbled  
2 cups fresh green beans, trimmed  
and cut into 1-inch lengths  
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
Pinch of saffron (optional)

Bring the water (or broth), potatoes, carrots and onions or leeks, and salt to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer uncovered for 20 to 40 minutes. Correct seasoning.

20 minutes before serving, add the beans, broken spaghetti, bread, pepper and saffron to the soup and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the green beans and simmer 5 to 10 minutes more, until they are cooked through but still crunchy. Taste and correct the seasonings.

### Ingredients for the pistou:\*

4 cloves crushed garlic, green sprout removed  
4 tablespoons tomato paste  
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil  
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
1/4 to 1/2 cup fruity olive oil

Prepare the pistou while the soup is cooking. My quick way: macerate the garlic with salt, and stir the ingredients together. When the soup is ready for serving, beat a cup gradually into the pistou. Pour in the rest of the soup. Serve with hot French bread, or hard toasted bread rounds with olive oil.

\* You can use ready made pesto and add the tomato paste and more olive oil, if needed

If you made enough soup for leftovers, mix the pistou with a little stock, and add to individual bowls as you are serving.