

Tuscan Ribollita

Serves 6-8 | 30 minutes prep + 3 hours cook time

I've said many times that leftovers are my favorite ingredient, and they're the foundation of this classic Tuscan bean soup thickened with bread. If you're like me, your refrigerator has some beans from the batch you cook every week and maybe some leftover farro. A half loaf of bread has been sitting on the counter for a few days and needs to be used soon or it will only be good for making breadcrumbs. I can pull a chunk of pancetta out of the freezer, see if I have a can of tomatoes in the pantry, and run to the store for a few vegetables. And I've got what I need to make ribollita.

Traditionally made on Friday, a day of fasting for observant Catholics, a simple bean and vegetable minestrone could be reheated or "reboiled" on Saturday, hence ribollita. The thrifty Tuscans never let stale bread go to waste, and the minestrone would be ladled over a thick slice in the bottom of the bowl.

Even if you don't have the leftovers, you can make ribollita.

1 cup (about ¼ lb) Borlotti, cranberry, or pinto beans

¼ cup Bluebird Grain Farms emmer farro

3 tablespoons chopped pancetta, optional

1 onion, chopped

1 stalk celery, chopped

1 large carrot, chopped

2 cloves garlic, chopped

5 sprigs flat leaf parsley, including stems, finely chopped

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil + more for serving

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 28 oz can Bianco DiNapoli crushed tomatoes*

1 bunch lacinato or Italian kale, chopped (including central rib)

2 yellow potatoes, peeled and cut into ½ inch pieces

1 cup water plus more as needed

Crusty, Italian-style bread, 1 thick slice per serving

Grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, for serving

Step 1 Cook ¼ lb borlotti beans in salted water until tender, about 2 hrs, adding water as needed to keep covered. Use a wooden spoon to mash some of the beans.

Step 2 Cook ¼ cup emmer farro in salted water to cover until tender, about 45 min, adding water as needed to keep covered.

Step 3 Cook pancetta, onion, carrot, celery, garlic, and parsley in olive oil with salt until soft and beginning to brown, about 15-20 minutes. Add tomato, cavolo nero, potatoes, and water, reduce heat, cover, and simmer 30 minutes.

Step 4 Add the cooked beans and farro along with any cooking liquid, taste and add salt as needed. Add more water if the soup seems too thick. Simmer for 30-60 minutes.

Step 5 To serve, place a slice of bread in the bottom of a wide bowl, ladle the soup over it, drizzle with good olive oil and sprinkle with grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.

If you have leftover soup, cut some bread into cubes, mix it into the soup until it's thick and porridge-like. Store in the refrigerator overnight, then drop spoonfuls into a hot skillet slicked with olive oil to make ribollita fritters.

*Whole tomatoes are fine, but crush them with your hands