

Slow Cooker Minestrone Soup

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook: 2 hours

Serves: 4

Ingredients

100g/3½oz smoked, dry-cured lardons

2 carrots, roughly chopped

2 sticks celery, sliced

1 onion, roughly chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 sprigs fresh rosemary, needles finely chopped

1 tsp dried thyme

1 tbsp tomato purée

400g/14oz can chopped plum tomatoes

1.2 litres/2 pints good-quality chicken stock

400g/14oz can cannellini beans in water, rinsed and drained

50g/1¾oz spaghetti, snapped into short lengths

100g/3½ head baby leaf or spring greens, thickly shredded

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

25g/1oz parmesan, grated (optional)

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Method

Put a large frying pan over a low heat, add the lardons and cook for 10 minutes until crisp, golden and the fat has run from the meat. Transfer onto a plate.

Tip the carrots, celery and onion into the bacon fat and fry for two minutes before adding the garlic, herbs and tomato purée. Cook for 1 minute, then add the tomatoes and most of the stock. Bring to the boil. Carefully transfer the soup to a slow cooker, cover with the lid, then cook on high for 4 hours until the vegetables are tender.

Stir the beans and pasta into the soup, adding the rest of the stock if it seems overly thick. Scatter the shredded greens over the top of the soup, then re-cover with the lid.

Cook for 30 minutes until the pasta is tender. Stir in the greens, season with salt and pepper, then serve in bowls with a drizzle of oil and plenty of parmesan.