

White Bean and Savoy Cabbage Stew with Big Cheese Croutons

This is a hearty and stick-to-your ribs sorta of soup. It's perfect for when the weather dips into brisker temperatures. I love Savoy cabbage and call for it here, but if escarole or Lacinato kale is easier to find, those work too. This dish is vegetarian, but you could add pancetta or a bit of bacon should you like. I'd crisp it up first, set it aside, and then add it back right before the soup goes in the oven.

Serves 4 to 6

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling
1 medium onion, roughly chopped
1 small bulb of fennel, roughly chopped
2 celery stalks, thinly sliced and leaves chopped and reserved for garnish
6 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
5 cups vegetable or chicken stock
2 cans butter or cannellini beans
4 cups shredded green cabbage, I prefer Savoy
11-ounces bread from a rustic loaf torn into 1 ½ inch pieces, about 3 cups
4 ounces fontina or gruyere or a combination of both
2 scallions, thinly sliced
Flaky salt for serving

METHOD

Heat the oven to 450 degrees

In a medium or 10-inch round Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium heat. When it shimmers, add the onion, fennel and the celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the garlic and the thyme cook one minute more. Season well with salt and pepper.

Add in the stock and the beans and bring to a simmer. With a wooden spoon or potato masher (my personal choice!), break down some of the beans. This will release some of their starchiness and thicken up your soup. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes.

Add in the cabbage, in batches if necessary, and cook until it has wilted and started to soften, about 10 minutes more.

Turn off the heat and top the soup with the bread and drizzle well with olive oil. Place in the oven to cook for about 10 minutes or so to give the croutons a head start on crisping up. Remove from the oven and sprinkle the cheese over the top. Place back in the oven until the cheese is melted and everything is bubbling, 3 to 5 minutes.

Remove from the oven and sprinkle with the reserved celery leaves and the scallions. Serve immediately in deep bowls. Garnish with flaky salt.