

Tuscan bacon and bean soup with wild garlic pesto

For the soup

- 50ml/2fl oz extra virgin olive oil
- 300g/10½ oz smoked streaky bacon, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp sherry vinegar
- 2 red onions, roughly chopped
- 2 carrots, roughly chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, roughly chopped
- 1 large leek, roughly chopped
- 2 large waxy potatoes, roughly chopped
- 6 vine tomatoes, roughly chopped (reserve the vines)
- small bunch fresh rosemary and thyme, tied with string
- 130g/4¾oz small orecchiette pasta
- 2 litres/3½ pints good-quality beef stock
- 1 x 400g tin cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 16 small florets purple sprouting broccoli
- 100g/3½oz baby leaf spinach
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the wild garlic pesto

- 15g/½oz fresh basil, roughly chopped
- 15g/½oz wild garlic, roughly chopped
- 50g/1¾oz pine nuts
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 15g/½oz Parmesan, finely grated
- ½ lemon, zest only, finely grated
- 1 tsp lemon juice, to taste
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

To serve

- small handful fresh basil, roughly chopped
- small handful fresh flatleaf parsley, roughly chopped
- small handful fresh chives, snipped
- 100g/3½oz Parmesan, finely grated
- olive oil, for drizzling
- 1 loaf crusty bread, to serve

Method

1. For the soup, heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan over a high heat. Add the bacon, then season and fry for 3–4 minutes, until caramelising but not burning. De-glaze the pan with the sherry vinegar. Add the red onions, carrots, garlic, celery and leek and cook for 8–10 minutes, or until softened.
2. Stir in the potatoes and tomatoes, with their vines, then add the rosemary and thyme bundle. Squash the tomatoes with a wooden spoon. Bring the pan to a simmer.
3. Heat the beef stock in a saucepan over a high heat. Add the pasta to the vegetables. Once the stock is simmering, pour this in too.
4. Pour the soup into the pressure cooker (CAUTION: Please follow the manufacturer's guidelines for safe use of your pressure cooker). Bring up to pressure and cook for 5 minutes at pressure. Turn off the heat and slowly release the pressure. Remove the rosemary and thyme bundle and tomato vines and discard. Stir in the cannellini beans, broccoli and spinach and allow to soften in the residual heat for 5 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, to make the pesto, grind the basil and wild garlic in a mortar with a pestle or food processor to release the natural oils. Then, add the pine nuts and lemon zest and grind. Once combined, add the olive oil to make a paste and grind in the Parmesan. Add a squeeze of lemon and season to taste.
6. To serve, pour into soup bowls and sprinkle over the fresh herbs, parmesan, wild garlic pesto and olive oil. Serve with crusty bread.