

Cabbage soup with toasted garlic bread

Difficulty: medium

Time: 2 h



This dish is a cabbage soup with toasted garlic bread. It is a traditional Tuscan dish, which means it is a “poor” (peasant) recipe prepared by farmers using the ingredients they produced on their allotments. The ingredients are cabbage, chard, cauliflower, pumpkin and home-made bread which was cooked in wood burning ovens and is typical unsalted Tuscan bread. The soup is made using other ingredients too, carrots, celery, basil and as a personal touch, I am going to use some fresh mint as well, or better still catmint, which grows in abundance in Tuscany, and especially on Elba, and is a wild aromatic herb.

The soup is prepared in a very simple way; onion, carrot and celery are used as the base of the soup, chopped into dice and simmered in extra-virgin olive oil. Cabbage is then added, with the chard, cauliflower and potatoes; the pumpkin is added last. The soup is cooked slowly for about 1-1 ½ hours. Lastly, some bread is toasted, which was once done in wood-burning ovens, with some garlic rubbed on and a little chilli pepper and fresh olive oil added. Cabbage fried in olive oil and garlic can also be added to the toasted bread, as a finishing touch. I would recommend a traditional Tuscan red wine as an accompaniment to this soup, preferably a Syrah.