

Brocoli Rabe – White Bean Soup

- 4 slices hearty whole wheat bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- large Spanish onion, thinly sliced
- tablespoons dry vermouth
- carrots, coarsely chopped
- 2 celery ribs, coarsely chopped
- 2 thyme sprigs
- 1 rosemary sprig
- 1 bay leaf
- garlic cloves, minced
- 1 quart vegetable
- 2 cans white cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 2 pounds broccoli rabe, large stems discarded, the rest coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 350°. Toss bread cubes with a generous chunk of olive oil on a baking sheet. Bake until browned and crisp, about 10 minutes.

In a large pot, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Add the onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden, about 10 minutes. Add the vermouth and stir, scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the casserole. Add the carrots, celery, thyme, rosemary, bay leaf and half of the garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are softened, about 5 minutes. Add the stock, beans and a large pinch each of salt and black pepper and bring to a boil. Simmer over low heat for 30 minutes, until the vegetables are very tender.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet. Add the remaining garlic and the crushed red pepper and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the broccoli rabe. Cover and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the broccoli rabe is tender, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Remove the thyme, rosemary and bay leaf from the soup. Puree the soup using an immersion blender, or in batches in a regular blender. Return the pureed soup to the casserole and bring to a simmer. Add the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Ladle the soup into shallow bowls, top with the broccoli rabe and croutons and serve.