

Rachel's Lentil Soup

First up is my wife's favorite lentil soup. It's a delicious soup, full of tons of vegetables, but a bit meat heavy for my taste. Still, she and my daughter love it! It is a hearty, cool weather soup that's pretty easy. This recipe is also a large quantity, so it's good for lots of leftovers, even for big families.

1/2 lb bacon, diced
3-4 turnips, diced (Use your tokyo turnips and you won't have to peel them. Save the greens for another use.)
2 carrots, diced
2 fennel stalks (not the white root), diced
1 onion, diced
2-3 leeks, halved and sliced (save the greens for stock)
2 c lentils, picked over and rinsed
2 T cider vinegar
6 c chicken stock
2 c beef stock
2 c water
2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
2 bay leaves
pepper
4 thyme sprigs
4 parsley sprigs, plus more to garnish
1 ham shank
1/2 lb smoked sausage, diced

Saute the bacon in a very large kettle until the fat is rendered and the bacon crisps slightly. Add the turnips, lower the heat, cover, and saute 5 minutes. Add the carrots, stir and cover, 5 minutes. Proceed the same way with the fennel, onion, and leeks in that order, until the leeks have cooked 5 minutes. Save time by prepping each vegetable while the previous one cooks.

Add the lentils and the vinegar and cook another 5-10 minutes, until the lentils are glistening. Add the stocks, water garlic, bay leaves, a generous grinding of pepper, the thyme, parsley and ham shank. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 30 minutes, uncovered. Remove the shank and when it cools a bit, cut the meat off the bone and return the meat to the soup. Remove the thyme sprigs, parsley sprigs, and the bay leaves from the soup. It's ok to leave the garlic in there. Someone will want it. If you prefer, saute your smoked sausage pieces before adding them to the soup, or just add them as is. Heat through, taste for salt and pepper (it will most likely need some salt), and finish with some chopped parsley. This is a great one dish meal.