

White bean soup with courgette and fresh herbs



Serves 4-6

dried cannellini beans 250g, soaked for at least 12 hours

garlic 1 head, halved plus 2 cloves, thinly sliced

thyme 3 sprigs

salt and pepper

parsley 1 bunch, leaves picked and roughly chopped

courgettes 2, trimmed and chopped into small cubes

basil 1 handful (or green garlic leaves)

extra virgin olive oil

Soak the beans ahead of time, for at least 12 hours (I prefer 24), and then drain and put them in a large pot and cover with about 5cm of water, bring to the boil and then drain and refresh with the same amount of water again.

Take a whole head of garlic and slice it in half down the middle and put both halves into the pot with the beans and water with 2 to 3 sprigs of thyme. Bring to the boil and then bring down to a simmer for 2-2½ hours. Check on the beans occasionally, you may have to add a little more water.

After 2 or 3 hours, check that the beans are ready (they should be tender), strain them and reserve the cooking liquid. Using a food processor, blitz half of the cooked beans and keep the rest whole. Mix the whole beans into the blitzed beans and add some of the cooking liquid to create a soupy texture and season with salt and pepper.

In a small pan, heat 1 tbsp of olive oil and add the 2 cloves of sliced garlic. Drop in the chopped parsley and toss. Remove from the pan and set aside. Add another tbsp of oil to the same pan and add the chopped courgettes. Do not salt as you want them to turn a little golden and soften. Add these to the garlicky parsley and toss. Add the chopped basil or wild garlic leaves and drizzle a little fresh oil and toss again. Serve the soup immediately with a spoonful of the courgette mixture and a drizzle of good extra virgin olive oil. Serve with crusty bread.