

## My Chicken & Vegetable Soup

I cooked this a lot for Eamonn during his Feel Good Factor weight loss challenge as it's very low in fat and is a good mixture of vegetables and protein. Eamonn calls it stew because it is very thick and hearty!

This recipe is for a large pot of soup so you can always freeze what you don't use. Also, I think it tastes even nicer the day after you've made it – just make sure you re-heat it well.

### Ingredients

- 2 x skinless chicken breasts – cut into bite size chunks
- 2 x rashers of smoked bacon – chopped (OPTIONAL)
- 2 x medium onions – chopped
- 3 x medium sized carrots – chopped
- 2 x leeks – chopped
- 2 x cloves of garlic – crushed or finely chopped
- 1 x can of Flageolet beans (or butter beans, haricot, lentils etc)
- 1 x can of chopped tomatoes
- **PLUS ANY VEG YOU LIKE OR YOU NEED TO USE UP!**
- **Tip – Chop all the veg about the same size and then they should cook evenly.**

### I Like:

- 2 x courgettes – chopped
  - Green beans – chopped
  - Cauliflower – broken into small florets
  - 2 x medium potatoes – diced. (You could leave these out if you're watching your carb intake, but I think they help thicken the soup.)
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- Olive Oil
  - Salt & pepper
  - 2 x Tsp of dried Oregano
  - 2 x Tsp of dried Basil
  - 2 x bay leaves
  - 2 x chicken or veg stock cubes
  - 2 x teaspoons of Pesto if you have it.

## Method

- Use a large non-stick saucepan with a lid. Heat the pan and pour in a good slosh of olive oil. Add the chicken chunks and fry until starting to turn a nice golden brown colour. Transfer them to a plate covered with kitchen towel which will absorb some of the fat, and leave to one side. Next fry the bacon pieces until just starting to colour. Transfer them to the plate with the chicken.
- Next gently sautee the chopped onion and garlic (you might need to add a little more olive oil to the pan first) until soft. Add the chopped leeks and carrots and continue to cook. (You're just softening them.) Then add the other chopped vegetables, whatever you have chosen.
- Drain the juice from the tin of flageolet beans and add those along with the tin of chopped tomatoes.
- Put chicken and bacon pieces back into the saucepan.
- Add Stock: I use two stock cubes because I like a fairly strong flavour. I usually use one chicken and one vegetable mixed together. It's hard to say the quantity of water to use, you just want to cover the contents of the saucepan – you can always add more water later.
- Add Seasoning:  
Salt & pepper to taste  
Dried herbs: I use Basil & Oregano & two bay leaves. Great if you have fresh herbs but add towards the end of cooking.  
2 teaspoons of green or red pesto. Optional but I think it gives it a richer flavour.
- Bring all up to the boil and then put the lid on and turn down to a gentle simmer. I cook it for about half an hour or until all the veg is soft. Stirring occasionally so it doesn't stick.
- Serve with a sprinkling of Parmesan cheese.