

## MINESTRONE

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ pound *pancetta*\* (Italian unsmoked cured bacon), chopped fine
- ½ cup fresh flat-leafed parsley leaves, washed well, spun dry, and chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped fine
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh sage leaves
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- 3 medium boiling potatoes (about 1 pound)
- 2 small zucchini, washed well and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 large vine-ripened tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped, or a 28-ounce can plum tomatoes, drained, seeded, and chopped
- ½ pound Swiss chard, washed well, drained, and cut into 1-inch pieces
- ½ red bell pepper, cut into ½-inch pieces
- rind from a 1-pound piece of Parmigiano-Reggiano (about ¼ pound) or 1 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (about 3 ounces)

- 6 cups homemade beef or chicken broth (or 3 cups canned broth plus 3 cups water)
- 3 cups cooked *cannellini* (white beans; about two 19-ounce cans, drained) or *borlotti* (cranberry beans)
- 2 cups thinly sliced Savoy cabbage (about ½ pound)
- freshly ground black pepper to taste

\*available at specialty foods shops and Italian markets

In an 8-quart heavy kettle heat oil over moderate heat until hot but not smoking and cook *pancetta*, parsley, garlic, and sage, stirring, 5 minutes. Add carrots, onions, and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, 10 minutes.

Peel potatoes and cut into ½-inch pieces. Stir into kettle potatoes, zucchini, tomatoes, Swiss chard, bell pepper, Parmigiano-Reggiano rind if using, and broth and simmer, partially covered, 1½ hours.

Stir into kettle beans, cabbage, pepper, and salt to taste and simmer, partially covered, stirring occasionally, 1 hour. Remove cheese rind if using and cut into bite-size pieces. Stir rind pieces or grated cheese into soup. (Minestrone will be very thick. If a thinner soup is desired add water.) Makes about 10½ cups.