

# Seasonal Vegetable & Cannellini Bean Stew with Cheese & Herb Dumplings

This is a rich adaptable stew that can be made any time of the year, although I tend to usually cook it in autumn or winter, using our harvests of carrots, pumpkins and potatoes combined with cavolo nero and carrot tops. But you could equally use zucchini, new potatoes and aubergines with silverbeet for the greens, or other summer harvests such as corn or green beans. It is a good idea however to always add a decent amount of starchy vegetables into the stew such as potato, carrot, pumpkin or kumara to soak up the flavours and to help thicken it.

*Serves 4 – 6 hungry people*

## Ingredients

### *For the stew*

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 – 2 stalks celery, diced
- 3 large cloves garlic, finely sliced
- 4 – 5 sundried tomatoes, diced
- 2 tablespoons each thinly sliced fresh sage, fresh rosemary and fresh thyme
- 2/3 cup dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight (see Note above)
- 2 cups mixed seasonal hard vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, turnips, potatoes, pumpkin, butternut, marrow, zucchini, aubergine, green beans etc, cut into medium sized chunks
- 2 cups mixed seasonal greens such as curly kale, cavolo nero, silverbeet, carrot and celery tops etc, thinly sliced
- Large handful of fresh Italian parsley and stems, finely sliced
- 1 x 400 gram tin whole peeled tomatoes *or* 6 – 7 medium fresh tomatoes, skinned (*see note below*)
- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

### *For the dumplings*

- 1 ½ cups flour
- 2 generous teaspoons baking powder

- 1 cup tasty cheese, grated
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme *or* rosemary
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup milk

## Method

1. Heat the oil in a wide deep pan that will be big enough to eventually fit the dumplings on top of the stew in one layer.
2. Add the onion, celery, garlic, sundried tomatoes and fresh herbs. Season with salt and gently sauté for a few minutes until the onion and celery begin to soften, making sure you don't burn the garlic.
3. Add the drained cannellini beans, the hard vegetables cut into chunks and mixed seasonal greens, along with the parsley, parsley stems, tomatoes and water and paprika.
4. Bring the stew to the boil then place the lid on the pan and turn the heat down. Simmer for 45 minutes or until the cannellini beans are cooked through, stirring occasionally. If you have used fresh tomatoes, you may need to add an extra ½ - 1 cup of water as the beans begin to cook and absorb the moisture.
5. While the stew is cooking make the dumplings.
6. Mix the flour, baking powder, cheese, thyme, and salt together in a bowl. Slowly pour in the milk and mix using a butter knife until a scone consistency is achieved and the dough comes together – depending on the flour used you may need to add a little bit more milk.
7. Divide the dough into eight evenly sized balls.
8. Season the stew with salt and freshly cracked pepper, then taste and adjust the seasoning if needed. This is your opportunity to season now before the dumplings are added.
9. Place the dumplings evenly on top of the stew, ensuring there is ample space between each one to allow for them to expand as they cook.
10. Place the lid back on and simmer for another 15 minutes, basting the dumplings with the sauce from the stew a few times while they are cooking. Be sure to replace the lid after basting to keep the heat and steam in.
11. Once the dumplings have simmered in the stew for 15 minutes test a middle one to see if it is cooked by sticking a skewer into it – if it comes out clean your dumplings are ready.
12. Top with extra parsley and serve. This meal reheats very well, just add a bit more liquid and simmer with a lid on until the stew is bubbling and hot and the dumplings are heated all the way through.

*\*\*If you are using fresh tomatoes, you will need to skin them first. This is done by scoring a cross into the top and bottom of each tomato, plunging them into boiling water for 30 seconds, then removing them with a slotted spoon. When the tomatoes have cooled enough to handle, you should be able to easily peel the skins off them using a small knife. Once you have done this, roughly chop them, being sure to save any liquid that comes out so it too can be added to the stew later along with the tomatoes.*