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Eggplant Parmesan Soup

Makes about 3 Qt/2.8 L – Serves 6 to 8

A customer came in recently, asked for a taste of the soup of the day without reading the daily specials board, and exclaimed, "This soup tastes exactly like eggplant parm!" The staff chuckled as they pointed to the "Eggplant Parmesan Soup" written on the chalkboard.

I asked Corey what made him think of making a soup version of this popular Italian classic, and it turns out he has a list of dishes he has either already made or is determined to make into soup. He rattled off macaroni and cheese, cheeseburger, BLT (on rye with mayo) – the list goes on and on. I haven't yet tried any of his other attempts, but this one works: tomatoes, cheese, garlic, bread, fresh basil – delicious!

3 tbsp vegetable oil
2 medium onions, cut into 1/2-in/12-mm pieces
3 garlic cloves, smashed and minced
2 large eggplants, chopped into 1-to 2-in/2.5- to 5-cm pieces
One 28-oz/680 g can "no salt added" diced tomatoes, with juice
2 cups/120 g bread, cubed
1 cup/55 g chopped fresh basil
1-1/2 cups/150 g freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 tbsp red wine vinegar
2-1/2 tsp kosher salt
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Special Equipment: large stockpot, blender or food processor

1. In the stockpot, heat the vegetable oil over high heat. Add the onions and garlic and stir for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the onions just start to soften. Add the eggplants and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the eggplants break down a bit and become slightly mushy.
2. Add the tomatoes and the same amount of water to the pot (just use the empty tomato can as a measure). Bring to a simmer over medium heat and simmer for about 5 minutes. Add the bread cubes and stir for 1 minute, or until the bread breaks down in the soup. Stir in the basil and Parmesan, turn off the heat, and let cool slightly.
3. In the blender, purée the soup in batches until very smooth. Return the soup to the pot and bring back to a simmer. Season with the vinegar, salt, and pepper. If the soup seems too thick, thin with a little water. Taste and adjust the seasoning.
4. Ladle the soup into bowls and serve immediately. The soup can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days or in the freezer for up to 1 month.