

Lush & Creamy Pasta e Fagioli with Fennel

By Ashley Alexander

Gather & Feast

One of my all-time favourite comfort meals is pasta e fagioli. It's incredibly warm, hearty, and nourishing—perfect for those cooler days. Traditional versions of this dish don't call for fennel, but I love the extra depth it adds. It's also a fantastic way to sneak in some extra veggies.

SERVES 4-6 | **PREP TIME** 15 minutes | **COOK TIME** 30 minutes | **TOTAL TIME** 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 100ml (1/3 cup) extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for serving
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 3 sticks celery, finely chopped
- 1 small bulb fennel, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 5 large garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 1 x 400g can tomato pulpa or crushed tomatoes
- 2 x 400g cans borlotti beans, drained and rinsed
- 750ml chicken or vegetable stock
- 250g short small pasta shape (such as ditalini or cavatelli)
- 1 parmesan rind (optional; enhances flavour of soup)
- Freshly grated parmesan for finishing



METHOD

1. Heat a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the olive oil, chopped onion, carrot, celery, fennel, rosemary, and bay leaves. Sauté for about 10 minutes until the vegetables are soft and lightly golden, stirring regularly. Cooking down the vegetables is crucial for developing the soup's rich flavour.
2. Add the sliced garlic and sauté for an additional 1-2 minutes.
3. Stir in the tomato pulpa or crushed tomatoes, borlotti beans, and stock. Mix well.
4. Remove the bay leaves from the soup and set them aside.
5. Use a stab mixer/hand blender to roughly blend about one-third of the soup. Alternatively, use a potato masher to gently mash some of the beans and vegetables. You can skip this step entirely but I love the creamy texture it produces.
6. Now add the pasta and parmesan rind along with the reserved bay leaves.
7. Simmer for a further 10-12 minutes or until the pasta is al dente.
8. Remove and discard the parmesan rind and bay leaves. Taste the soup for salt and add as needed.
9. Ladle the soup into bowls and finish with an additional generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and freshly cracked black pepper. Enjoy!

NOTES

During the initial step of cooking the vegetables in olive oil, be patient and let them cook down thoroughly. Don't rush this stage; it truly enriches the soup's flavour.

A generous amount of high-quality extra virgin olive oil is essential for this recipe. Its robust flavour enhances the overall taste.

I've incorporated a parmesan rind into the soup to amplify the flavour. I typically save rinds from past Parmigiano Reggiano or Grana Padano chunks in my freezer for this purpose. You might even find bags of rinds available at delis or specialty grocers. These rinds are excellent for imparting a savoury umami essence to soups and ragus. If you don't have any on hand, feel free to omit this step; it's not crucial.

When serving, a generous drizzle of extra virgin olive oil over the top is also key to this exceptionally delicious, thick, and hearty soup.

If you don't have a stab mixer/hand blender, you can use a potato masher to gently mash some of the beans and vegetables. You can skip this step entirely but I love the creamy texture it produces.



Find the recipe and watch the video online:

<https://www.gatherandfeast.com/lush-creamy-pasta-e-fagioli-fennel>

Let me know if you make the recipe! x @gatherandfeast