



family-tested winner dinner

**Betsy  
Brethen**

# Minestrone Soup great for dinner in a hurry

Now that Thanksgiving is under your belt, so to speak, the race is really on for the holiday season.

As if we women were racetracks. Nary an old nag among us. We burst out of the starting gate and make tracks around town with lists clutched tightly in hand. There are plans to make, presents to buy and wrap, cookies to bake, holiday trimmings to put around, cards to send, parties to attend, and all this in addition to everything else we do the other 11 months of the year. Whew, it's almost enough to make one cry out, "Bah, humbug!" and pull up lame.

But that is not the spirit of the season. Lyn Bell, our Winner Dinner Winner of the week, has submitted a recipe for Minestrone Soup that may be just the kind of thing you would like to serve your family during the hectic month of December. This recipe makes a lot of soup and a lot of sense because what is left over from dinner can be frozen into plastic containers or zip-seal pouches.

You will find that at a moment's notice you will be able to have dinner ready, a comforting insurance policy to have on these days when you return home sway-backed from shopping.

BELL OFTEN cooks two or three different meals on days when she has the time and then freezes them in individual serving-size containers. This system cuts down on her daily cooking time in the kitchen and also provides her teen-age son with a



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Lyn Bell of Bloomfield Hills prepares minestrone soup served with salad and rolls. Leftover soup can be frozen and reheated when needed.

quick and nutritious meal before he goes off to participate in the many different sports he is involved in throughout the year.

Thank you, Lyn Bell, for sharing your family's favorite dinner menu with us, and congratulations on being a Winner Dinner Winner.

Readers, I know this is such a busy time of the year, but if you have a special dinner you like to serve your family at this festive time, please jot it down and send it in. Until next week, take care. Here's hoping this week's Winner Dinner will put you in your family's winner's circle.

Submit your recipes, to be considered for publication in this column or elsewhere, to: Winner Dinner, P.O. Box 3502, Birmingham 48012. All submissions become the property of the publisher.

Each week's recipes are printed the same size, so that you may clip and save them in a three-ring binder. Use a paper punch to make holes in the clipping or paste the clipping on a blank sheet of three-ring notebook paper. Another option is to simply file the clippings in a folder with pockets that will hold them.

## Observer & Eccentric

### Winner Dinner

#### Menu

MINESTRONE SOUP  
TOSSED GREEN SALAD  
TANGY TARRAGON SALAD DRESSING  
WHOLE WHEAT ROLLS

#### Recipes

##### MINESTRONE SOUP

This recipe makes 18-20 servings. It can be frozen in small containers, defrosted and used for quick, individual meals.

Soak 1 pound of white beans in water for a day and a half. Drain and rinse the beans and cook in 10 cups of fresh water for 1 1/2 hours with 1 bay leaf and 1 cup unsalted vegetable broth powder. Or, if there is no time to prepare the dry beans, use 3-4 cups of pre-soaked bottled northern white beans and cook them and the vegetables listed below in 10 cups of fresh water.

Saute in 2-3 tablespoons of safflower oil in a large, heavy soup kettle:  
4 cloves of garlic, minced  
4 medium onions, chopped  
4 stalks celery, chopped  
4 carrots, chopped

Add to the saute:  
2 teaspoons basil  
1 teaspoon oregano  
1 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley  
1 28-ounce can of tomatoes, cut up  
4 boiling potatoes, peeled and sliced  
2 zucchini, chopped  
2 cups cabbage, chopped coarsely  
2 cups green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces  
1 cup okra, chopped

Add beans and water and cook for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Add a handful of broken spaghetti or, for fun, pasta alphabet letters, and cook for 1/2 hour.

Add juice of one lemon and correct seasoning to taste.

##### TOSSED GREEN SALAD

One of the secrets to making a great-tasting salad is the way in which the greens are prepared. Of course, we all wash the greens before they are torn or sliced, but drying them well, either by spinning them in a salad spinner or with a clean, dry dish towel, is a very important part of the salad-making process. Once dried, the greens should be wrapped in another clean towel and chilled in the refrigerator, even if only for 10 minutes, although the longer they "chill out," as the boys would say, the crisper they will be.

1 head red leaf lettuce  
1 head romaine lettuce  
2 carrots, scraped and sliced  
1/2 cucumber, sliced  
1 tomato, sliced  
a handful alfalfa sprouts  
1/2 cup toasted sunflower seeds  
1 avocado, sliced

##### TANGY TARRAGON SALAD DRESSING

This recipe can be made in a food processor or blender or mixed by hand with a wire whisk or fork.

2-3 cloves of garlic, mashed  
1 cup vegetable oil  
1/2 cup vinegar  
1/2 cup dijon mustard  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
16 grinds of pepper mill or 1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 teaspoon dry tarragon

## Shopping List

1 pound dry white beans or 1 (48-ounce) jar northern white beans  
1 box vegetable broth powder  
spaghetti or pasta alphabet letters  
one 28-ounce can tomatoes  
garlic  
onions  
celery  
carrots  
boiling potatoes  
zucchini  
cabbage  
green beans  
okra  
cucumber  
tomato  
avocado  
red leaf lettuce  
romaine lettuce  
parsley  
alfalfa sprouts  
tarragon (dry or fresh)  
basil  
oregano  
salt  
pepper  
vegetable oil  
vinaigrette  
dijon mustard  
sunflower seeds  
whole wheat rolls

## Notes

Bell often cooks two or three different meals on days when she has the time and then freezes them in individual serving-size containers.

# Frozen Chocolate Souffle low-sugar, low-fat treat

This recipe for frozen chocolate souffle is from the article "A Great Chef's Vegetarian Dinner" in a recent issue of Bon Appetit magazine. The dessert is low in sugar and fat.

FROZEN CHOCOLATE SOUFFLE  
It's hard to believe that this dense

and delicious dessert is low in sugar and fat.  
Four servings  
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder  
2 tablespoons boiling water  
3 ounces Neufchatel cheese or other light cream cheese, room temperature

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (preferably Dutch process), sieved  
5 tablespoons sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 egg, room temperature  
1 egg white, room temperature  
candied violets (optional)

Stir espresso powder into water in large bowl. Add cheese, cocoa powder, 2 tablespoons sugar and vanilla extract and work with wooden spoon or spatula to blend thoroughly.

Off heat, whisk egg, egg white and remaining 3 tablespoons sugar in top

of double boiler until foamy. Set over gently simmering water. Using electric mixer, beat mixture until tripled in volume, about 5 minutes.

Stir 2 tablespoons egg mixture into chocolate mixture to lighten. Gently fold remaining egg mixture

into chocolate mixture in 2 batches. Divide mixture among 4 pots de creme or espresso cups. Cover and freeze at least 3 hours. (Can be prepared 1 week ahead.) Let stand 10 minutes in refrigerator before serving. Garnish with candied violets if desired.

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