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Andalusian Chickpea and Spinach Soup

By MARTHA ROSE SHULMAN

A simple peasant soup that is often served with toasted or fried bread doused with vinegar, pine nuts, hard-boiled egg and parsley added at the end, this is a filling and comforting soup that is still suitable for a late spring/early summer meal.

1 cup chickpeas, washed, picked over and soaked for 4 hours or overnight in 1 quart water

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 14-ounce can chopped tomatoes with juice, or 1 pound tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped

2 teaspoons sweet paprika

1 pound potatoes, peeled and diced

1/4 cup dry white wine

Salt to taste

Pinch of saffron

1 pound spinach, stemmed, washed thoroughly in 2 changes of water, and coarsely chopped

Freshly ground pepper

1. Drain the chickpeas and combine with 1 quart fresh water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer 1 hour. Add salt to taste and continue to simmer until tender, 30 minutes to an hour.

2. Heat the oil over medium heat in a heavy soup pot and add the onion. Cook, stirring, until tender, about 5 minutes. Add 2 of the garlic cloves and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the tomatoes, paprika and a generous pinch of salt and cook, stirring often, until the tomatoes cook down to a fragrant sauce, 10 to 15 minutes.

3. Add the chickpeas with their liquid, the potatoes, wine, more salt to taste, pepper, and 2 cups

water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes.

4. Stir in the remaining garlic, the saffron and the spinach and simmer another 5 minutes. Add freshly ground pepper, taste and adjust seasoning, and serve.

Variations: You can add toasted bread, plain or doused with vinegar, when you add the spinach, for a thicker soup.

Yield: 6 servings.

Advance preparation: You can make this through Step 3 up to a day ahead. You might want to hold off adding the spinach until you reheat, if you want it to have a nice color. Bring the soup to a simmer and proceed with Step 4.

Nutritional information per serving (6 servings): 259 calories; 7 grams fat; 1 gram saturated fat; 1 gram polyunsaturated fat; 4 grams monounsaturated fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 41 grams carbohydrates; 10 grams dietary fiber; 79 milligrams sodium (does not include salt to taste); 11 grams protein

Martha Rose Shulman is the author of “The Very Best of Recipes for Health.”