

Bread and Tomato Soup with Spinach and Parmesan

Start to finish: 40 minutes / Servings: 4

The Tuscan bread soup called acquacotta, which translates from the Italian as “cooked water,” makes thrifty use of day-old bread and other leftovers, transforming them into a rustic, satisfying dish. It’s a cousin of the better-known pappa al pomodoro, another type of Tuscan bread and tomato soup. But whereas pappa al pomodoro simmers bread in a tomatoey broth, for acquacotta, the bread is placed in bowls, then the soup is ladled on top. Oftentimes, individual bowlfuls of acquacotta are finished with a poached egg. In our version, we skip the egg but add fresh spinach (or arugula) for color and fresh, mineral flavor.



4 ounces country-style bread, torn into ½-inch pieces (about 4 cups)

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more to serve

1 small yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced

1 medium carrot, peeled and chopped

1 teaspoon dried thyme OR dried rosemary

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

28-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes, crushed by hand

1 quart low-sodium vegetable broth OR chicken broth

5-ounce container baby spinach OR baby arugula

2 ounces Parmesan OR pecorino Romano cheese, finely grated (1 cup)

Heat the oven to 450°F with a rack in the middle position. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss together the bread and 1 tablespoon oil, then distribute in an even layer. Bake until the bread is light golden brown, 5 to 7 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan over medium, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil until shimmering. Add the onion, carrot, thyme and ½ teaspoon salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are softened and lightly browned, 6 to 7 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes with juices and ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer over medium-high, then reduce to medium, cover partially and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes.

Stir in the broth and bring to a simmer, uncovered, over medium-high. Reduce to medium, then stir in the spinach and cook until just wilted, about 1 minute.

Off heat, taste and season with salt and pepper. Divide the toasted bread among individual bowls and ladle in the soup. Serve sprinkled with the Parmesan and drizzled with additional oil.

Optional garnish: Chopped fresh basil