WINTER MINESTRONE SOUP

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil
5 slices bacon, diced
1 large yellow onion, diced
4 large carrots, diced
4 large celery stalks, diced
2 cups butternut squash, peeled and diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, minced
26 oz can diced tomatoes in juice
8 cups chicken broth
1 bay leaf
salt and pepper
15 oz can kidney beans, drained
2 cups small pasta such as mini-orchetti, cooked al dente in salted water and drained
8 oz fresh baby spinach, stems removed and roughly chopped
1/2 cup white wine
2 tablespoons pesto

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large dutch oven over medium-high heat, add the olive oil and bacon. Cook bacon until brown and crisp. Add the onions, carrots, celery, squash, garlic, and thyme. Cook, stirring frequently, about 8-10 minutes, until the vegetables begin to soften and the onions are translucent. Add the tomatoes, chicken broth, bay leaf, and a generous amount of salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and cover. Simmer 30 minutes.

Discard the bay leaf. Add the beans, cooked pasta, fresh spinach, white wine, and pesto. Stir to combine and heat through. Taste for seasoning and add more salt and pepper as needed.

Serve with grated parmesan cheese and crusty bread.