

# RIBOLLITA

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By MARTHA ROSE SHULMAN

In Tuscany region of Italy, the way to transform leftover bean and vegetable soup into the ultimate comfort food is to reheat the soup with dry or toasted bread, then blend it into a thick, comforting pap. This is called ribollita, which means “reboiled.”



- 6 ounces (1 scant cup) white or borlotti beans, soaked, if desired, for four hours and then drained
- 1 onion, cut in half
- 3 large garlic cloves, 1 crushed, the rest minced
- Salt to taste
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 celery rib, diced
- Pinch of red chili flakes
- 1/4 Savoy or green cabbage, cored and shredded (2 cups shredded)
- 1 14-ounce can chopped or puréed [tomatoes](#), with juice
- 3/4 pound (1 bunch) Swiss chard, kale or a mixture, stemmed, cleaned and chopped or cut in chiffonade (3 cups chopped greens)
- A bouquet garni made with a bay leaf, a few sprigs each thyme and parsley, and a Parmesan rind
- 6 thick slices country bread, preferably whole-grain (about 6 ounces)

**1.** Place the beans in a medium saucepan, and add 4 cups water, the halved onion and crushed garlic clove. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, add salt to taste, cover and simmer 1 hour. Remove the onion halves. Taste and adjust seasonings.

**2.** Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a heavy soup pot, and add the chopped onion, carrots and celery. Cook, stirring often, until the onion is tender, about five minutes. Add the garlic and chili flakes, and stir together for 30 seconds to a minute until fragrant. Add the cabbage. Cook, stirring, until the cabbage wilts, three to five minutes. Add the tomatoes. Cook, stirring, until the tomatoes cook down and smell fragrant, five to 10 minutes. Season to taste with salt.

**3.** Stir in the beans and their liquid, add the bouquet garni and another 2 cups of water, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer 30 minutes or until the beans are tender. Taste and adjust seasonings. Add the greens, raise the heat and simmer covered for another 15 minutes. The greens should be falling apart in the soup. Remove the bouquet garni.

**4.** Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Place the bread on the rack, and toast until dry but not browned, about 15 to 20 minutes. Break up into pieces. Remove about 1 cup of the beans and vegetables from the soup. Bring the remaining soup to a simmer, and add the bread. Submerge in the soup, and remove the soup from the heat. Let stand for 20 minutes until the bread is soft. Blend, using a hand immersion blender or the pulse action of a food processor. Return to the pot, add the beans and vegetables you set aside, and heat through. The ribollita should have the consistency of oatmeal. Dilute with water as necessary. Taste and adjust salt and pepper. Spoon the ribollita into bowls or onto soup plates, drizzle olive oil over each bowl and serve.

*Note:* You can make ribollita with 5 to 6 cups of any type of leftover minestrone using the bread proportions above.

**Yield:** Serves four to six. **Advance preparation:** Ribollita will stiffen up considerably if you make it too far in advance. If you do so, thin it out as desired with water or stock and adjust salt.