



ITALIAN WEDDING SOUP (MINESTRA MARITATA)

6 SERVINGS

2½ hours
45 minutes active

The name of the dish on which this recipe is based is minestra maritata, which translates from the Italian as “married soup.” It is not the Italian wedding soup of meatballs, greens and pasta that’s popular in the U.S., though the two do share similarities. At the family-owned restaurant La Tavernetta Vittozzi in Naples, we were taught how to make the Campanian version of the classic dish, and we used the lessons learned for our own adaptation. As in Naples, the meats in our recipe are bone-in cuts of beef and pork that give the broth richness and body. But for easier eating, after cooking we shred the meat and discard the bones. Pancetta also simmers in the mix along with a piece of Parmesan rind, each lending even more savoriness to the broth. La Tavernetta Vittozzi uses three different varieties of wintry greens in their minestra maritata—cabbage, broccoli rabe and escarole, the latter two blanched separately before they are added to the soup. (This “marriage” of cooked greens and broth is what gives the dish its name.) To streamline, we opt for rabe or escarole (or a combination, if it suits you) and we simmer the vegetable directly in the broth. Rabe offers an assertive bitterness that nicely balances the richness of the soup; escarole is milder and cooks down to a silky, supple texture. Warm, crusty bread is the perfect accompaniment.

Don't bother with precision when prepping the onion, carrots and celery. The aromatics are simmered in the broth for flavor, but later are scooped out and discarded. If using escarole, be sure to wash it thoroughly as the frilly leaves tend to trap a good amount of grit.

INGREDIENTS	
8	OUNCES PANCETTA, CHOPPED
2	TABLESPOONS EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
1	LARGE YELLOW ONION, ROUGHLY CHOPPED
2	MEDIUM CARROTS, PEELED AND ROUGHLY CHOPPED
1	MEDIUM CELERY STALK, ROUGHLY CHOPPED
4	MEDIUM GARLIC CLOVES, SMASHED AND PEELED
3	TABLESPOONS TOMATO PASTE
½-¾	TEASPOON RED PEPPER FLAKES
	KOSHER SALT AND GROUND BLACK PEPPER
4	BAY LEAVES
	2½-POUND RACK PORK BABY BACK RIBS, CUT INTO 3 SECTIONS BETWEEN THE RIBS
	1-POUND BONE-IN BEEF SHANK (1 TO 1½ INCHES THICK)
1	2-INCH PIECE PARMESAN CHEESE RIND, PLUS FINELY GRATED PARMESAN, TO SERVE
1	BUNCH BROCCOLI RABE, TRIMMED AND ROUGHLY CHOPPED, OR 1 LARGE HEAD ESCAROLE, CHOPPED, OR A COMBINATION
½	CUP LIGHTLY PACKED FRESH BASIL, CHOPPED

DIRECTIONS

In a large Dutch oven, combine the pancetta and oil. Cook over medium-low, stirring occasionally, until the pancetta begins to brown, about 10 minutes. Increase to medium, stir in the onion, carrots and celery, then cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften, about 10 minutes.

Add the garlic, tomato paste, pepper flakes and 1 teaspoon salt; cook, stirring, until the tomato paste begins to stick to the pot and brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Add 10 cups water and the bay, then bring to a boil over medium-high, scraping up any browned bits. Add the ribs, beef shank and Parmesan rind. Return to a simmer, then cover, reduce to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, until a skewer inserted between the pork ribs and into the meat on the shank meets no resistance, about 2 hours. Remove from the heat.

Using tongs, transfer the ribs and shank to a large bowl; set aside to cool. Meanwhile, using a slotted spoon, remove and discard the solids from the broth. Tilt the pan to pool the liquid to one side, then use a wide spoon to remove and discard as much fat as possible from the surface of the liquid.

When the meats are cool enough to handle, shred the beef into bite-size pieces, discarding the fat, bone and gristle. Using a paring knife, cut the pork ribs between the bones to separate into individual ribs. Remove the meat from the bones and shred into bite-size pieces; discard the fat, bones and gristle. Set both meats aside.

Bring the broth to a simmer over medium-high. Add the rabe to the pot and cook, stirring often, until tender, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in the shredded meats and cook, stirring, until heated through, about 2 minutes. Off heat, stir in the basil, then taste and season with salt and black pepper. Serve with grated Parmesan on the side.

