

Tuscan Kale And Squash Minestra With Pasta

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3 Tablespoons Olive Oil
2 medium onions, finely chopped
3 ribs celery
1 tablespoon fennel seed, lightly crushed (or chopped fennel tops?)
Salt
3 cloves garlic
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme
2 quarts chicken or vegetable stock
1 piece parmesan rind (the harder end that is not used)
grated parmesan cheese for sprinkling
1 small butternut squash, peeled and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes (about 5 cups)
1 bunch ($\frac{3}{4}$ lb) kale, stems removed, leaves chopped
1 cup small pasta, such as orzo or ditalini
Pepper to taste
Balsamic vinegar

1. In a large dutch oven, over medium heat, heat 3 tablespoons olive oil. add the onions, celery, fennel and a pinch of salt and cook until soft, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic and thyme and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the stock, parmesan rind, and squash, increase heat to high, and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the squash is just tender, stirring occasionally, about 20 minutes.

Remove parmesan rind.

2. Add kale, stir to mix, and simmer for 10 minutes. Add pasta, $2\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt, and pepper to taste, stir to mix and cook until the pasta is tender, about 10 minutes.

3. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper if necessary. Serve with drizzled olive oil and balsamic vinegar, and grated parmesan.