

Bread Soup

1 1/2 pounds onions (2 large), thinly sliced
1 medium green bell pepper, seeded and thinly sliced
1/2 cup olive oil, divided
3 medium cloves garlic, pressed
1 teaspoon roasted, ground cumin
1/3-cup Marsala wine
1 28-ounce can tomatoes with juice or 4 cups chopped, seeded fresh tomatoes
3 cups water or chicken stock
1/2 pound stale crusty French or Italian bread, torn into large chunks
 sea salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste
1 cup loosely packed, roughly chopped fresh herbs: sweet basil, Thai basil, oregano, thyme, and/or parsley mixed to taste

In a large chef's pan over low heat, sweat onions and bell pepper in 1/4-cup oil, covered, for 15 minutes. Add garlic and continue sweating until onion is translucent, stirring occasionally, about 15 more minutes. Uncover and raise heat to medium high. Add cumin and sauté, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 3 minutes.

Add Marsala and reduce, about 2 minutes. Add tomatoes, water or chicken stock, bread, remaining 1/4-cup oil, salt, and pepper. Reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Remove from heat, add herbs, and let rest, covered, 1 to 2 hours. Purée with an immersion blender or food processor fitted with metal blade. Garnish with yogurt and shredded cucumber, sour cream, or crème fraîche.
Makes about 2 quarts.

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