

# Nellie's Vegetable Soup

*Adapted from the recipe used for 30 plus years  
at The E Z Way Inn,  
2228 West Station Street  
And as recounted by Sharon Fiffer in the Jane Wheel Mysteries*

Since Nellie only cooked for crowds, amounts should be adjusted for your size crowd. Nellie also never measured anything, so, in the spirit of her cooking, and her voice in my head—*Just use your common sense, for god's sake!*

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## **Ingredients:**

1-2 pounds short ribs

(If Chouinards Grocery were still on Station Street, Nellie would order them from Herman and Leroy and demand they be meaty good ones!)

(Also—if you asked Nellie if there is a vegetarian version, she might ask, *What the hell is a vegetarian?* But if you ask me? See note at the end)

Onions

Carrots

Celery

Potatoes

Cabbage

Canned tomatoes with their juice (you can use fresh, but Nellie would never waste ripe slicing tomatoes that she could put in a salad or throw on a sandwich in a soup, where they will cook down anyway)

Updated additions—don't tell Nellie ( I add fresh green beans and fresh spinach—and if I want to call it Minestrone, I also add kidney beans and rice and throw in a parmesan rind during the cooking—then serve with lots of grated fresh parmesan. Nellie would shudder at that—*Cheese in soup? What the hell's wrong with you?*

## **To Make:**

Get a giant soup kettle (remember what we said about amounts, sizes and common sense?)

Salt and pepper the ribs and place them in kettle with lots and lots of chopped onion (at least a cup or two) Add water to cover meat and onions by at least 4-5 inches. Simmer until ribs are done and meat is ready to fall off the bone—an hour or so. Remove ribs with a slotted spoon and allow to cool.

Add a whole bay leaf and sliced carrots and celery (less celery than carrots—maybe just a few stalks, maybe a pound or more of carrots) keep simmering for about 30 minutes. Then add diced potatoes and keep simmering for 30 minutes. (Nellie never did a small dice except for the onions which were finely chopped—one-inch pieces for potatoes and carrots) Add water as necessary. If using, add green beans broken into one-inch pieces and simmer about 20 minutes. Add two large cans of diced tomatoes with juice ( one if you're scaling back amounts ) When soup is again simmering, add about 1/2 head cabbage sliced as if for slaw. Add chopped fresh spinach after a few minutes. When leafy vegetables are wilted, put in the beef you've removed from the bones and shredded. When all is hot and tender, soup is ready.

Seasoning—in addition to the bay leaf, Nellie occasionally added oregano as well as plenty of salt and pepper. Taste as you cook. In addition to the fresh spinach and green beans that I add, if I have any, I throw in a handful of chopped fresh basil.

One more note: If you are a vegetarian or have any of those types in the family—and I do—I change up the method a bit. I sauté the chopped onions (and leeks if I have any) in olive oil, then add equal parts vegetable broth and water and then proceed with the vegetables. For the veg version, I usually add kidney beans and Arborio rice and parmesan and turn it into that minestrone I mentioned earlier—more protein and heartier even though it's meatless.

I also garnish with fresh chopped parley, but don't even get me started with what Nellie would say about such an affectation.

Serve with crusty bread (at the EZ Way Inn, you got two packages of saltines) and beer or hearty red wine. This might be peasant soup—but company will love it—the thicker the better so add a lot of what your family likes best!

If you make a lot—and we always do—no problem, because it is so much better the second day and, if there's any left, it's ambrosia on the third day. If you still have more left, then you're just not eating enough—eat more—enjoy.