

Cheesy Roasted Cauliflower & White Bean Soup

Reward your trip to the polls with a cozy mug or bowl of soup. Enjoy!

Makes about 4 quarts – freezes beautifully so don't hesitate to make a double batch

Olive oil

About 4 ounces (4 slices) thick cut bacon, chopped

1 head (2-3 pounds) cauliflower, cut in bite-sized pieces and florets

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1 large onion, roughly chopped

2 carrots, chopped

2 garlic cloves

3-4 cups cooked small white beans (about 8 ounces dried beans or 2 15-ounce cans)

6-8 cups chicken stock or broth

2 teaspoons finely chopped rosemary

3-4 sprigs thyme and 1 bay leaf tied together with kitchen twine

2 cups half & half

2 ounces plus more for garnish Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated

2 ounces plus more for garnish Pecorino Romano cheese, grated

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Lightly coat a heavy skillet with olive oil and heat on medium. Add the bacon and sauté until crispy. Remove the bacon from the pan and reserve.

Put the cauliflower on 1-2 baking sheets, drizzle with 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar and enough bacon fat to lightly coat, season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. Roast the cauliflower at 375 degrees until tender, about 30 minutes.

If you like – set some of the roasted florets aside for garnish.

Put the onion, carrots and garlic on a baking sheet, drizzle with 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar and enough bacon fat to lightly coat, season with salt and pepper and toss to combine. Roast the vegetables at 375 degrees until tender, about 20 minutes.

Put the vegetables in a large soup pot, add the white beans, 6 cups stock and the herb bundle and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer, stirring occasionally for about 20 minutes.

Cool the soup for about 20 minutes. Remove the herb bundle, and, working in batches, puree the soup. Use a blender for very smooth soup or pulse in the food processor for a more rustic version. Return the soup to the pot and stir in the half-and-half.

If you have the time, cool the soup to room temperature and store in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight.

Stirring frequently, adding more stock if necessary, reheat the soup to steaming on medium. Stir in the cheeses and stir until the cheeses have melted and combined into the soup.

Ladle the soup into mugs or bowls, sprinkle with the reserved florets and bacon and serve. Pass more grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and Pecorino Romano for the cheese lovers.

