

Italian Sausage Soup

Everytime Mom complains about cooking, I bring her something over. I've brought over this soup a couple of times and she asked for the recipe. So here it is, as you might know, I never measure anything and so things are approximate. It makes a large kettle of soup. It is easy to throw together and can probably feed at least 8-10 folks.

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs of Italian Sausage, note, I pick the ground rather than links because it is easier to deal with and some folks don't like the floating casings. I also mix 1 lb sweet Italian Sausage with 1 lb Hot Italian Sausage (1/2 lb. for Jan).
- One large, hurkin' large onion
- 8-12 cloves of fresh garlic (big cloves)
- 1 28 oz can of chopped tomatoes (or stewed or whole mashed...whatever)
- 1 15 oz can of chopped tomatoes (same)
- 1 16 oz can of garbanzo beans (drained)
- 1 16 oz can of green beans
- 1 16 oz can of red beans (drained)
- about 20-35 fresh mushrooms (small) Note: you can't have too many
- 1 yellow crook necked squash (or zuchinni)
- About 20 baby little carrots
- Sometimes some chopped Cabbage (about 1 cup worth)
- About a tablespoon of oregano
- 8 oz or so of grated Italian cheese (I buy a mix of romano, mozzarella, and parmesan)

Process:

- Take the flat packages of sausage (or links) and cut them into about 3/4 inch squares.
- Dump them into the large pot and start browning them.
- Take the garlic cloves and smash them with a chef's knife and take off the skins. Chop them coarsely.
- Chop the onion coarsely
- Leave the little mushrooms whole and the bigger ones cut in half.
- Chop the cabbage into 3/4 inch squares or so
- Chop the squash into 1/2 by 3/4 inch chunks or so.
- Cut the baby carrots lengthwise
- When the sausage chunks are kinda sorta brown:
 - Dump everything else in, except the cheese.
 - I usually dump the green bean water in, but not the garbanzo or red bean water
 - I usually fill the tomato cans with water and dump that in as well.
 - Toss in the oregano
- Cook so it is barely boiling for a couple of hours at least
- Taste it and salt to taste (I put in about a tsp). You can add pepper, but I leave that for table dressing as Janice doesn't like it much. You can also add more oregano.
- Don't drain the sausage, it is that deadly fat that makes it taste good.

Serving:

- Get it pretty darned hot, put in bowls, and dump about 1/4 cup of the cheese on top.
- I pepper the heck out of it.

Hints:

- This soup freezes and restores very well. I freeze it in a bowl and store it in a ziplock.
- You might be tempted to put some pasta in it, but I recommend doing it upon serving. Reheated pasta with soup fragments.
- The squash and cabbage cook down a lot and you can add it later, but I am lazy and don't mind it.
- You can put other vegetables in it if you wish, but they should be the kind that remain firm when cooked for a while.
- You can put a splash of red wine in there if you like.
- You need to watch the water as it cooks and need to add some to make it as "soupy" or "stewy" as you like.
- We like to have it with a brown and serve whole wheat baguette
- This makes a LOT of soup and you need a big pan.