

Italian Chickpea and Salt Cod Soup

Zuppa di Ceci e Baccalà

Prep Time	20 minutes + soaking time
Cook Time	50 minutes
Total Time	1 hour 10 minutes
Servings	4

Ingredients

- 1 lb (450 g) salt cod (baccalà), already soaked and desalted
- 2 cans (15 oz / 425 g each) chickpeas, drained and rinsed, or about 1 1/2 cups (300 g) dried chickpeas, soaked overnight and cooked
- 2 medium potatoes, about 12 oz (350 g), peeled and cut into small cubes
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, lightly crushed
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup (240 ml) tomato passata or crushed tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 3-4 cups (700-950 ml) water or light vegetable broth
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 small sprig rosemary
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- Red pepper flakes, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Salt, only if needed
- Extra virgin olive oil, for serving

Instructions

1. Prepare the baccalà. If using traditional salted baccalà, soak it in cold water for 24-48 hours, keeping it refrigerated and changing the water several times. Drain well, remove any skin and bones, and cut the fish into large bite-size pieces.

2. Make the flavor base. Heat the extra virgin olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-low heat. Add the chopped onion and cook gently for 5-6 minutes, until soft and translucent. Add the garlic and a pinch of red pepper flakes and cook for another minute without letting the garlic brown.

3. Add the tomato. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for about 1 minute. Add the tomato passata or crushed tomatoes and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

4. Add the chickpeas and potatoes. Add the chickpeas, diced potatoes, bay leaves, rosemary, and about 3 cups (700 ml) of water or broth. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat and simmer partially covered for 20-25 minutes, or until the potatoes are almost tender.

5. Make the soup creamier. Using the back of a wooden spoon, lightly crush some of the chickpeas against the side of the pot. If the soup becomes too thick, add a little more hot water.

6. Add the baccalà. Gently add the pieces of baccalà to the soup. Cook over low heat for another 10-12 minutes, stirring as little as possible so the fish does not break apart too much. Taste before adding any salt.

7. Finish and serve. Remove the bay leaves, rosemary sprig, and garlic. Add the chopped parsley and freshly ground black pepper. Let the soup rest for 5 minutes before serving. Ladle into bowls and finish with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serve with crusty Italian bread.

Nonna's Tips

- Never salt the soup before adding the baccalà; the fish may already provide all the seasoning needed.
- For a thicker, more rustic soup, mash about one-quarter of the chickpeas.
- Once the baccalà is added, stir very gently so the fish stays in nice pieces.
- The finished soup should be thick and spoonable, somewhere between a soup and a stew.