

FROM GIGLIO

Gran Minestrone

"GRAND" MINESTRONE

SERVES 6 TO 8.

We end with the *Gran minestrone del Giglio*. This small jewel of an island, smaller than Elba, off the Tuscan coast is known for the variety of its fish. Lobster is so plentiful that the natives consider it a "cheap" food; Gigliese consider this elaborate minestrone more of a treat.

Farro (spelt or emmer), an ancient soft wheat known to the Romans, is still used in the Etruscan areas of Italy, mainly Tuscany. It is difficult though not impossible to separate the bran from the seed, which in our health-conscious days would be considered a blessing. Therefore it has most often been used as a whole grain, more rarely ground as flour. Depending on where it is grown, the soaking and cooking time of farro varies. Most dishes based on farro are soups.

Fava beans, another component, are often available only dried with the skins still on and must be soaked overnight before they are soft enough to be shelled.

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| 1 medium-sized carrot, scraped | 8 ounces farro (spelt or emmer, types of soft wheat berry) (see Note) | ly defatted or 3½ quarts cold water |
| 2 large celery stalks | 4 tablespoons olive oil | Salt and freshly ground black pepper |
| 2 medium-sized cloves of garlic, peeled | 8 ounces very ripe tomatoes or 8 ounces drained canned tomatoes, preferably imported Italian | TO SERVE |
| 4 ounces Savoy cabbage leaves, cleaned and large veins removed | 3½ quarts cold chicken or meat broth, preferably homemade and complete- | 6 to 8 teaspoons olive oil |
| 8 ounces skinned dried fava beans (see Note) | | Freshly ground black pepper |
| | | OPTIONAL |
| | | About 1 cup of toasted or lightly fried <i>crostini</i> (croutons) |

Finely chop carrot, celery and garlic all together on a board. Cut the cabbage into thin strips and soak it in a bowl of cold water. Meanwhile, soak the fava beans and the farro together in a bowl of cold water for 15 minutes.

Place a medium-sized stockpot with the oil over medium heat. When the oil is warm, add the chopped ingredients and sauté for 2 minutes, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon.

If fresh tomatoes are used, cut them into pieces. Pass fresh or canned tomatoes through a food mill, using the disc with smallest holes, directly into the stockpot. Drain the cabbage and add it to the pot; mix very well.

Drain the fava beans mixed with the farro and add them to the stockpot along with the cold broth or water; simmer for 1½ hours, adding salt and pepper to taste after 1 hour. By that time fava beans should be completely dissolved and the farro cooked.

Let the minestrone rest for 10 minutes before serving it with a teaspoon of oil drizzled over each serving along with a twist of black pepper. If using croutons, sprinkle them still warm over each serving, and the minestrone becomes a *zuppa*.

You may prepare this minestrone in the morning, let it rest in the stockpot



The old-time glassed-in kitchen cabinet, here from Giglio, with postcards and other mementos. The Gran minestrone is in the old-fashioned soup bowls.

and serve at room temperature in the evening. This is the normal way of serving it during the summer.

NOTES: If shelled dried fava beans are not available, use the unshelled ones, soaking overnight in cold water and shelling them before using.

If farro is not extremely fresh and does not soften somewhat after 1 hour of soaking, soak overnight in cold water before using it.