

Prep Time: 20 Minutes
Cook Time: 45 Minutes
Total Time: 1 Hour 5 Minutes
Servings: 6-8 Bowls
Calories: ~180 kcal per serving

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Why This Recipe Works

The secret to a great vegetable soup isn't just the vegetables; it is the layering of flavors. Many home cooks throw everything into a pot at once, resulting in a mushy, bland stew. We

are going to use a technique called “sweating” the aromatics and “blooming” the tomato paste. This builds a deep, rich umami base that makes the soup taste like it has been simmering all day, even if it hasn’t.

We will also categorize the vegetables by “Hard” and “Soft.” Hard vegetables (carrots, potatoes) need a head start. Soft vegetables (zucchini, peas, spinach) need to be added at the end to retain their texture and bright color.

Ingredients

The Base & Aromatics

- 3 tbsp Olive Oil: Use a good quality extra virgin olive oil for the best flavor.
- 1 Large Yellow Onion: Diced. Yellow onions have the best balance of sweet and pungent for soups.
- 3 Medium Carrots: Peeled and diced. These provide natural sweetness.
- 3 Stalks Celery: Diced. This provides the savory, salty backbone (the “holy trinity” of soup).
- 4 Cloves Garlic: Minced. Add more if you are a garlic lover.

The Flavor Builders

- 2 tbsp Tomato Paste: Essential for depth.
- 1 tsp Dried Oregano: Earthy and slightly bitter, perfect for tomato-based soups.
- 1 tsp Dried Thyme: Floral and woody.
- 1/2 tsp Smoked Paprika: Adds a subtle smokiness that mimics bacon fat without the meat.
- 1 Bay Leaf: Remove before serving.
- Salt and Pepper: To taste.

The Hearty Vegetables

- 2 Medium Yukon Gold Potatoes: Cubed (skin on or off). Yukon golds hold their shape well and get creamy.
- 1 cup Green Beans: Trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces.
- 1 Medium Zucchini: Quartered and sliced.
- 1 Cup Frozen Corn: (Or canned, drained).

- 1 Cup Frozen Peas: Added at the very end.

The Liquid

- 1 Can (14.5 oz) Diced Tomatoes: Fire-roasted is best if available.
- 6 Cups Vegetable Broth: Low sodium preferred so you can control the salt.
- 1 Parmesan Rind (Optional but highly recommended): This is the “secret ingredient.” It adds a savory, nutty, umami punch that is irreplaceable. If you are strictly vegan, skip this or use a nutritional yeast blend.

Finishing Touches

- 1 tbsp Red Wine Vinegar or Lemon Juice: Acid cuts through the richness. Do not skip this.
 - 1/4 Cup Fresh Parsley or Basil: Chopped, for garnish.
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Equipment Needed

- Large Heavy-Bottomed Pot (Dutch Oven is ideal)

- Wooden Spoon
 - Chef's Knife and Cutting Board
 - Measuring Cups and Spoons
 - Ladle
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Instructions

Phase 1: The Prep (Time: 15 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

Before you turn on the heat, prep everything. This is called *Mise en Place*.

1. Chop the Aromatics: Dice the onion, carrots, and celery into uniform pieces (about 1/2 inch). This ensures they cook at the same rate.
2. Mince the Garlic: Finely chop the garlic and set it aside separately from the other aromatics (garlic burns faster).
3. Prep the Hard Veg: Cube the potatoes and chop the green beans.
4. Prep the Soft Veg: Slice the zucchini and measure out your frozen corn and peas.

Phase 2: Building the Base (Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: Medium)

This is the most critical step for flavor development.

1. **Heat the Pot:** Place your large pot over Medium Heat. Add the olive oil. Wait 30 seconds for it to shimmer.
2. **Sweat the Aromatics:** Add the onion, carrot, and celery. Sauté for 5-7 minutes. You want them to soften and become translucent, but not brown. If they start browning, lower the heat.
3. **Add the Garlic:** Stir in the garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant. Do not burn the garlic, or the soup will be bitter.
4. **Bloom the Spices:** Add the tomato paste, oregano, thyme, and smoked paprika. Stir constantly for 1 minute. The tomato paste will darken slightly. This “blooming” process releases the fat-soluble flavors of the spices.

Phase 3: The Simmer (Time: 25 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

Now we let the magic happen.

1. **Deglaze:** Pour in the diced tomatoes (with their juices) and scrape the bottom of the pot with your wooden spoon to lift up any browned bits (fond). This is pure flavor.
2. **Add Liquids & Hard Veg:** Add the vegetable broth, potatoes, green beans, and the bay

leaf. If using a Parmesan rind, drop it in now.

3. Simmer: Bring the soup to a boil, then immediately reduce the heat to Low to maintain a gentle simmer.
4. Cook: Cover partially and simmer for 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are just fork-tender.

Phase 4: The Finish (Time: 10 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Add Soft Veg: Stir in the zucchini and corn. Simmer for 5-7 minutes. You want the zucchini to be tender but not mushy.
2. Add Peas: Stir in the frozen peas. They only need 2 minutes to heat through.
3. Taste and Adjust: This is the most important step for the cook.
 - Salt: If it tastes flat, add more salt.
 - Acid: Squeeze in the red wine vinegar or lemon juice. This brightens all the flavors instantly.
 - Heat: Add a pinch of red pepper flakes if you like a kick.
4. Remove: Discard the bay leaf and the Parmesan rind.

Phase 5: Serving

Ladle the soup into bowls. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley or basil. Serve with a crusty piece of sourdough bread for dipping.

Recipe Notes & Variations

The “Intensity” Guide:

- Low Intensity: Chopping vegetables, simmering, measuring spices.
- Medium Intensity: Sautéing aromatics, stirring constantly to prevent burning.
- High Intensity: Boiling over (avoid this!), rapidly reducing liquids.

Vegetable Swaps:

- Low FODMAP: Omit onion and garlic. Use the green parts of leeks and garlic-infused oil.
- Keto/Paleo: Omit potatoes and corn. Add extra zucchini and cauliflower.
- Summer Version: Use fresh tomatoes instead of canned, and add fresh basil at the end.

Storage:

- Fridge: Store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.
 - Freezer: This soup freezes beautifully. However, potatoes can get grainy when frozen and thawed. If you plan to freeze the whole batch, consider omitting the potatoes and adding them fresh when you reheat.
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Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Note: Nutritional information is an estimate based on standard ingredients. It will vary based on the specific broth used and the size of your vegetables.

- Calories: 185 kcal
- Total Fat: 7g (Saturated Fat: 1g)
- Cholesterol: 0mg (Vegetarian/Vegan)
- Sodium: 480mg (Depends heavily on broth)
- Total Carbohydrates: 28g
- Dietary Fiber: 6g
- Sugars: 8g

- Protein: 4g
- Vitamin A: 80% DV
- Vitamin C: 45% DV
- Calcium: 6% DV
- Iron: 10% DV