

CREAM OF VEGGIE TRAY SOUP WITH CHEESE

serves 6

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 1 large onion, chopped
 - 1 cup each: baby carrots and celery sticks
 - 1/2 cup each cherry tomatoes and sliced red and yellow peppers
 - 2 teaspoons dried thyme or 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
 - Handful fresh chopped parsley
 - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
 - 1 cup water
 - 8 cups (32 ounces) low-sodium chicken broth
 - 2 large peeled and chopped potatoes
 - 1 cup each chopped broccoli and cauliflower
 - Hot sauce, a drop or two, optional (just give the soup a bit more flavor--not enough for heat)
 - 1/4 cup heavy cream or whole milk
 - 1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese, optional
1. Heat oil over medium heat in a 6-quart soup pot; add onion - fresh ground pepper and cook, stirring, until vegetables are about half-way tender--about 15 minutes. Pour in water and chicken broth, raise heat to high, and bring to a boil. Stir in potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower. Reduce heat to simmer and, stirring occasionally, cook until all vegetables are very tender indeed. Shake in a drop or two of hot sauce, if desired.
 2. Puree using an immersion blender or carefully, in batches, in a blender or food processor. Return to heat if necessary and reheat. Stir in cream and cheese and whisk until cheese is melted. Do not boil. Taste, adjust seasonings, and serve hot. (If warming later or next day, heat over low flame, stirring, being careful not to boil the soup or the dairy products will separate.)

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