

# Robust Vegetarian Stew

serves 8-10

A thick and hearty vegetable stew, especially satisfying on a cold blustery day. Delicious and fortifying. Your home will be graced with a wonderful aroma while the stew cooks. My most popular soup.

**2 T. extra virgin olive oil**  
**1 c. washed leeks, white parts cut into 1/4" thick rounds**  
**1 c. onion, 1" chunks**  
**1/2 c. red wine, drizzled as needed**  
**3/4 c. white mushroom, 1/2" chunks**  
**1/2 c. carrot, 1/4" half rounds**  
**4 potatoes, 1 1/2" chunks**

**6 oz. tomato paste**  
**2 T. balsamic vinegar**  
**2 T. molasses**  
**1 T. tamari or soy sauce**  
**2 tsp. salt**  
**1 1/2 tsp. black pepper**  
**1/2 tsp. dry basil or 1 T. fresh**  
**8-10 c. vegetable stock (see pg. )**

Heat the oil in a 6-8 quart soup pot on medium high heat. Add the leeks and onions and saute' until they begin to brown, stirring occasionally. As they begin to stick, drizzle in a little bit of the red wine, stirring, to release the stuck bits into the soup. This is called the fond, and it contributes a rich flavor to the finished soup. The onions and leeks want to turn a uniform medium-dark brown color, without burning. Continue until the onions are caramelized, sweet and dark, about 20-30 minutes. Add the mushrooms and saute' until they have softened and begun to release their juices, about 8 minutes. Add the carrots and potatoes and stir well.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the tomato paste, vinegar, molasses, tamari, salt, pepper, basil, and 1 cup stock. Pour this into the pot. Add enough additional stock to cover the contents by 2". Turn the heat to high and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, and simmer until tender and thick, stirring every 5 minutes or so, about 45 minutes to an hour. Cook until the potatoes are completely softened, and beginning to fall apart; their starch helps thicken the stew. Add additional stock if necessary; the finished stew wants to be thick.

On a snowy winters night, serve this soup with a crisp salad with croutons and parmesan dressing, thick crusty bread with olive oil to dip, and a fruit crisp with whipped cream. Invite someone to dinner and hope they you get snowed in. Light a candle and enjoy the nourishment.