

HEART-HEALTHY AT HOME

# FOOD AS MEDICINE



Gina Cousineau

By Gina Cousineau

As I turn 58 this week, I remind my senior clients, me being one, that we are sitting in the midst of what are potentially the best years of our lives. As a culinary nutritionist, I strive to merge the two worlds of “nutritious and delicious” when helping my clients use a “food as medicine” philosophy. While we can all agree upon what a wholesome diet looks like, putting it onto your plate multiple times a day, week after week, in a sustainable way, is always a task.

This recipe is the perfect collaboration of plants combined to give you appropriate calories, a huge boost of plant-based protein, a plethora of vegetables that are both low in calories and high in nutrition, topped with a little flavor boost of Parmesan Reggiano providing additional protein and a ton of joy.

While I personally follow an omnivore diet, including animal foods most days, a meatless meal is always a welcome change. Using bean pastas allows those who prefer a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle, or who might have gluten intolerance, get adequate protein along with wonderful texture and flavor, sans the “meat.” Nutritional Yeast or vegan “cheese” can replace the Parmesan if desired.



## Macaroni Minestrone Soup

- 2 tbsp Olive Oil
- 2 cups Zucchini, small diced
- 2 cups Carrots, small diced
- 2 cups Onions, small diced
- 2 cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp Fresh Thyme, chopped (or ½ tsp dried)
- 4 cups Vegetable Broth (or chicken broth)
- 15 oz Tomato Sauce, canned
- 1 15-oz can Cannellini Beans, drained/rinsed
- 1 8-oz box Chickpea Pasta Shells (or any other small pasta)
- 10 oz Baby Spinach (can be omitted)
- Fresh Basil, cut into strips, optional
- Fresh Parmesan cheese, grated

Heat olive oil in large pot w/ lid, and sauté zucchini, carrots, onions, garlic, and thyme, until veggies are soft, seasoning with salt and pepper (about 10 minutes). Stir in vegetable broth, tomato sauce, and cannellini beans, bringing to a boil. Cover, lower heat to simmer, and allow to cook for 30-plus minutes. When ready to serve, add pasta and cook until pasta tender. Remove from heat and stir in baby spinach. Season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes, as desired. Top each serving with fresh basil and grated Parmesan cheese. Makes 6 servings

400 calories / 41.3 g carbs / 11.6 g fat / 29.1 g protein

Gina Cousineau is a trained chef, fitness professional, and integrative/functional nutritionist. She educates her clients how to advocate for their health using “food as medicine,” helping them make a complete lifestyle shift, beginning with nutrition education and culinary skills, partnered with her food template and recipes, and adding in a little calculated exercise, which allows them to lose weight and thrive. You can reach her at 949.842.9975, mamagslifestyle.com, or follow her on social media @mamagslifestyle.