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Chicken Tortellini Soup

Browning chicken thighs and vegetables layers the flavors in this relatively quick-cooking soup. Using cheese tortellini instead of noodles adds a hearty, cheesy dimension to the soup as well. This recipe uses fresh pasta, but you can also use dried tortellini; cook it according to package directions.

If you're making this soup for a group and don't anticipate having any leftovers, you can cook the tortellini directly in the soup. However, if you're making the soup to eat over the course of several days, I recommend cooking and storing the tortellini separately; add just enough of the cooked tortellini to a serving of soup and reheat it gently on the stove. Otherwise, storing the tortellini in the soup will cause the pasta to absorb the broth, swell, and become mushy.

Tortellini or ravioli filled with spinach, mushrooms, or sausage would also work well in this soup. You can also top the soup with grated Parmesan cheese or fresh spinach (or Swiss chard) wilted in butter and minced garlic.

You can also substitute rotisserie chicken in the soup; just tear or cut it into bite-sized pieces and add it to the soup after the vegetables are sautéed. Rotisserie chicken can be quite salty so hold off on seasoning the soup until the end of the cooking time.

1-1/2 pound package of boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-sized pieces
Salt, pepper, and garlic powder to taste
4 TBS oil (olive, grapeseed, canola, or vegetable)
1 medium-sized onion, peeled and finely chopped
2 stalks of celery including leaves, finely chopped
3 large carrots, peeled, trimmed, and cut into bite-sized pieces
2 cloves of garlic, peeled and finely chopped
¼ cup white wine (or use chicken stock)
2 TBS chopped fresh parsley plus more for garnish
Zest of one lemon
8 cups (2-32 oz boxes) of homemade or low-sodium chicken stock or broth
9 oz package of fresh cheese tortellini, cooked according to package directions, drained and set aside (if they stick together, add a little bit of the pasta water or oil to separate them)

Using a paper towel, pat the chicken dry. Season lightly with salt, pepper, and garlic powder on each side of the meat. Set aside.

Heat a large stockpot on medium. Add 2 TBS oil. Place the chicken into the pot in an even layer (you may have to do this in batches). Sauté the chicken for 2 – 3 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Remove the browned chicken and set aside.

Add the wine to the pan and using a wooden spoon, scrape up the brown bits.

Add 1 – 2 TBS of oil. Add the onions, celery, and carrots and sauté for 5 minutes or just until the vegetables start to turn lightly brown. Add the garlic and cook for 30 seconds, making sure it doesn't burn.

Return the chicken and any of its juices to the pot. Add 2 TBS of parsley and the chicken stock or broth. Cover the pot partially with a lid and bring the soup to a simmer.

Simmer for 20 – 30 minutes or until the carrots are fork-tender but not mushy and the chicken is cooked through.

Add the cooked tortellini. Check the soup for seasoning and salt and pepper if necessary. Cook for a minute or two, just until the tortellini are reheated.

Garnish the soup with the lemon zest and fresh parsley.