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Ratatouille

Ratatouille is a wonderfully flavorful French vegetable stew; it can be eaten hot or cold, and it's very filling! Try adding a thick-sliced fresh baguette to complement this tasty vegetable stew. This recipe takes advantage of your summer garden vegetables. Allow some prep time — you'll be slicing and dicing. We added a teaspoon of Herbs de Provence for an intense country French flavor.

2 Tbs. olive oil
1 tsp. minced garlic
1 medium onion, diced
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
1 14-oz. can vegetable stock
1 large eggplant, diced
3 medium zucchini, quartered and cut into 1/4" slices
1 red and 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
1 cup mushrooms, quartered
1 tsp. dried Herbs de Provence
3 Roma tomatoes (peeled, seeded, and diced)
5 sprigs Italian parsley, finely chopped
8-10 basil leaves, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the garlic and onion and continue to sauté until onion turns translucent, about 5 minutes. Add tomato sauce and stir. Pour in vegetable broth and stir until the liquid begins to bubble.

2. Add the diced eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers, mushrooms, and dried Herbs de Provence. Stir gently to combine, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring every couple of minutes. It may look like there is not enough liquid, but do not add liquid — the vegetables will release a lot of juice as they cook. Just keep stirring every couple of minutes. The vegetables should be tender but not mushy.

3. Stir in the diced tomatoes. After a minute or two, the tomatoes will be heated through. Turn the heat down to the lowest setting. Stir in the chopped parsley and basil. Add salt and pepper to taste — Sue adds about 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Although ratatouille is usually served hot, it is also delicious served at room temperature the next day, which allows the vegetables a chance to reach their optimum flavor.