

## Vegetarian Tortilla Soup

By now, you probably know that I love to cook, and most of the meals I make are in my kitchen. Sometimes, though, I don't want something complicated, and when that happens, it's recipes like this that end up on my table.

This is a simple, delicious, flavorful soup, and there's nothing special about it, but every time I've made it for other people, they always ask for the recipe. Most are surprised to learn just how quickly it comes together. It's something I've made so many times now that I can get it on the table in 20 minutes, and I almost always have all the ingredients in my pantry.

Usually, I use olive oil, but recently I tried using avocado oil, and while the difference is subtle, I won't be going back. The herbaceous scent of the avocado oil pairs so nicely with Mexican flavors, and goes so well with lime juice and black beans that it's a natural fit.

One of the keys to making this soup so flavorful is not only the combination of spices — chili powder, cumin, coriander, and Mexican oregano — but also the fact that they are sautéed for several minutes in the avocado oil with the onions, giving them a toasty, roasted flavor that really shines through in the end result.

Serve this with whatever toppings you like. I like diced avocado, tortilla strips (extra good if made yourself with avocado oil!) and some shredded cheese, but you can add sour cream, cilantro, diced jalapeños; be creative with toppings. You can add shredded chicken for more protein if you like, but the beans make it pretty filling as is.

Ingredients:

Tortilla strips (optional — you can use store bought crushed chips instead):

1/4 cup extra-virgin avocado oil

6 corn tortillas, cut into strips

Soup:

3 tablespoons extra-virgin avocado oil

1 onion, diced

2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons ground chili powder

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon Mexican oregano

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 14-ounce cans diced tomatoes (fire roasted for more flavor)

6 cups vegetable stock

2 14-ounce cans black beans

1 cup corn kernels

Juice of 2 limes

1/4 cup fresh chopped cilantro

Sea salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste

Toppings: Shredded cheese, sour cream, diced avocado, chopped peppers, tortilla strips

Directions:

If making the tortilla strips, heat the oil in a heavy skillet over medium high heat until very hot. Add a tortilla strip to test; if it sizzles, add a single layer of strips, being careful not to overcrowd the pan. Continue cooking the tortillas until they begin to turn golden brown and remove from the pan; drain on paper towels.

For the soup, heat the oil in a large saucepan or Dutch oven and add the onion. Cook for 2 minutes, add the seasonings and a pinch of salt and pepper. Cook for 3-4 more minutes, until onions are very soft. Stir in the garlic and cook for an additional minute.

Add the tomatoes and the stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a low simmer and add the beans, corn kernels, lime juice, and cilantro. Simmer for 4-5 minutes on low heat, until heated through.

Serve the soup hot, topped with desired toppings.