CONCOCTIONS / SOUP BOWLS

Olive Garden–Inspired Zuppa Toscana



6 bowls · About 12 cups
Prep 15 min · Cook 45 min
Total about 1 hr · Active about 30 min

Spicy pork sausage, russet potatoes and kale in a creamy broth, finished with crisp bacon.

SAUSAGE & AROMATICS

- 4 oz (113 g) raw bacon, cut 1/2 inch
- 1 lb (454 g) raw spicy Italian pork sausage; remove casings
- 1 medium yellow onion (6 oz / 170 g), diced
- 4 garlic cloves (12 g), minced
- 1/2 tsp fennel seeds, lightly crushed
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper

BROTH, GREENS & CREAM

- 1 1/2 lb (680 g) russet potatoes, scrubbed; quarter lengthwise, slice 1/4 inch
- 6 cups (1.42 L) low-sodium chicken stock
- 4 oz (113 g) stemmed kale leaves, chopped
- 1 1/4 cups (300 ml) heavy cream
- Up to 1/2 tsp fine salt, only as needed

EQUIPMENT. 6-quart pot, 10-inch skillet, slotted spoon, lined plate, knife/board, measures and instant-read thermometer.

METHOD

1. Prep & crisp bacon. Prep vegetables first; keep meats refrigerated until needed. Put bacon in a cold 10-inch skillet. Cook over medium heat, turning, about 8–12 minutes until crisp; drain on a lined plate. Reserve all bacon for finishing; discard its fat. Use separate raw/cooked utensils; wash hands and raw-contact surfaces.

2. Brown sausage. Meanwhile, cook sausage in a 6-quart pot over medium-high heat, breaking it into bite-size crumbles, about 8–10 minutes. Check several larger crumbles reach 160°F with a clean thermometer. Transfer to a clean plate. Drain pot fat, leaving only 1 tbsp; discard excess. [2]

3. Build the broth. Soften onion in the retained fat over medium heat, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, fennel and pepper; stir 1 minute. Add stock, scraping up browned bits, then potatoes and cooked sausage. Bring just to a simmer, about 5 minutes; simmer gently, partly covered, 15–18 minutes until potatoes yield easily to a fork. Do not hard-boil.

4. Finish gently. For a little body, mash about 1/2 cup potatoes against the pot and stir back in; leave the rest in slices. Add kale and simmer 3–5 minutes until tender. Lower heat, stir in cream and heat 2–3 minutes until steaming; do not boil. Taste before adding any of the optional salt.

5. Serve. Stir to distribute sausage and potatoes, divide among six bowls and top evenly with all the crisp bacon. Serve promptly. The roughly 12-cup yield varies with evaporation and potato packing; this is a home estimate, not the restaurant’s portion specification.

LEFTOVERS. Refrigerate in shallow containers within 2 hours (1 hour above 90°F), at 40°F or below. Use within 3 days of preparation or an earlier product limit; discard if left out too long. Reheating does not reset the clock. [3]

REHEAT. Bring leftover soup to a rolling boil and verify 165°F throughout; stir frequently. Cream may separate. [3]

Original development, not kitchen-tested. Yield and times estimated. AI-generated serving illustration, not a cooked-batch photo. Contains milk and pork; check sausage, bacon and stock labels for additional allergens. No dietary certification.

Olive Garden’s menu establishes the dish identity [1]; measures, seasoning and method are our own, not its unknown restaurant formula.

[1] Olive Garden menu · [2] Safe temperatures · [3] USDA leftovers