



Ajo Blanco (Chilled Almond Soup)

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

- 6 ounces (1 small to medium loaf) of day-old good quality French or Italian bread crust removed and pulled apart and shredded by hand into small (no larger than one inch) pieces
- 1 c whole blanched almonds
- 4 crushed garlic cloves
- 1/2 c of Spanish (preferably) extra-virgin olive oil + 2 Tbsp
- 1/3 c sherry vinegar
- 1 1/2c good quality chicken stock
- 1 c seedless green grapes
- 1 cup of French or Italian bread crust removed and cut into 1 inch cubes

Directions

1. Soak 6 oz. of bread in cold water for 5 minutes, and squeeze to remove excess moisture.
2. Blanch the almonds by dropping them into boiling water for 30 seconds or until the skins feel loose. Remove the skins by pinching the almonds.
3. Put almonds and garlic in a food processor and process until well ground.
4. With the motor running, add the 1/2 c of olive oil in a smooth slow steady stream.
5. Slowly add the sherry vinegar and the stock.
6. Add the bread a bit at a time and continue to process until the mix has reached the desired consistency.
7. Blend for 1 minute.
8. Place in the refrigerator for 2 hours. The soup thickens a bit while refrigerated. Add more stock or water to get the right consistency.
9. Meanwhile make the croutons: heat the other 2 Tbsp of oil in a large pan and toss the 1 cup of bread over medium heat until evenly golden brown.
10. Place the croutons on paper towels to absorb excess oil.
11. Serve the soup cold, garnished with the croutons, grapes and (perhaps) a small splash of aged sherry vinegar.

Based on a recipe I found in *The Foods of Spain* by Vicky Harris et al.