VEGETABLE & HERB CHICKEN STEW

By: Simply Creative Chef Rob Scott

**Ingredients:**  Yield: 4-6 Servings

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 stalks celery, cut into bite-size pieces

1 carrot, peeled, cut into bite-size pieces

1 small onion, chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 14.5 ounce can chopped tomatoes

1 14 ounce can low-sodium chicken broth

½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn into pieces

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves

2 chicken breasts with ribs (about 1 ½ pounds total)

1 15 ounce can kidney beans, drained

**Directions:**

* Heat the oil in a heavy 5 ½ quart saucepan over medium heat
* Add the celery, carrot, and onion
* Sauté the vegetables until the onion is translucent about 5 minutes
* Season with salt and pepper, to taste
* Stir in the tomatoes with their juices, chicken broth, basil, tomato paste, bay leaf, and thyme
* Add the chicken breasts – press to submerge
* Bring the cooking liquid to a simmer
* Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer gently uncovered until the chicken is almost cooked through, turning the chicken breasts over and stirring the mixture occasionally, about 25 minutes
* Using tongs, transfer the chicken breasts to a work surface and cool for 5 minutes
* Discard the bay leaf
* Add the kidney beans to the pot and simmer until the liquid has reduced into a stew consistency, about 10 minutes
* Discard the skin and bones from the chicken breasts
* Shred or cut the chicken into bite-size pieces
* Return the chicken meat to the stew
* Bring the stew just to a simmer
* Season with salt and pepper, to taste
* Ladle the stew into servings bowls and serve with bread (crusty bread is recommended)