Minestrone (Italian: *minestra* [soup] + *-one* [augmentative suffix] hence "the big soup," the one with many ingredients) is the name for a variety of thick Italian soups made with vegetables, often with the addition of pasta or rice. Common ingredients include beans, onions, celery, carrots, stock, and tomatoes.

There is no set recipe for minestrone, since it is usually made out of whatever vegetables are in season. It can be vegetarian, contain meat, or contain a meat-based broth (such as chicken stock). Angelo Pellegrini, however, argued that the base of minestrone is bean broth, and that Roman beans "are the beans to use for genuine minestrone".[1]

Minestrone is one of the cornerstones of Italian cuisine, and is almost as common as pasta on Italian tables.[2]

The Roman army is said to have marched on minestrone and *pasta e ceci*

The introduction of tomatoes and potatoes from the Americas in the Mid 16th Century changed the soup by making available two ingredients which have since become staples.

There are two schools of thought on when the recipe for minestrone became more formalized. One argues that in the 17th and 18th centuries minestrone emerged as a soup using exclusively fresh vegetables and was made for its own sake (meaning it no longer relied on left-overs), while the other school of thought argues that the dish had always been prepared exclusively with fresh vegetables for its own sake, but the name minestrone lost its meaning of being made with left-overs.

Due to its unique origins and the absence of a fixed recipe, minestrone is not particularly similar across Italy: it varies depending on traditional cooking times, ingredients, and season. Minestrone ranges from a thick and dense texture with very boiled-down vegetables, to a more brothy soup with large quantities of diced and lightly cooked vegetables that may include meats.

In modern Italian there are three words corresponding to the English word 'soup': *zuppa*, which is used in the sense of tomato soup, or fish soup; *minestra*, which is used in the sense of a more substantial soup such as a vegetable soup, and also for 'dry' soups, namely pasta dishes; and *minestrone*, which means a very substantial or large soup or stew, though the meaning has now come to be associated with this particular dish.