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Soups from the Sea

Selecting the Most Select

“This is some fine kettle of fish” is a phrase I hope you’ll use often when cooking the recipes in this chapter. This eighteenth-century expression originally meant a difficult or awkward situation, and that holds true for these soups and stews, too.

While meats are added to the soup base at the onset of cooking, or soon thereafter, seafood is the last ingredient to be added to these recipes due to its short cooking time. Cubes of fish cook in three to five minutes, while it can take cubes of beef up to three hours to reach tenderness. In fact, overcooking is a common mistake cooks make when handling seafood.

Another difference, when cooking fish and seafood, is that it does not freeze well—either before or after cooking. The reason is that when food is frozen, the liquid inside its cells expands to form ice. This expansion punctures the delicate cell walls, which makes the fish mushy once thawed.

Though fish cooks quickly, it’s the base that takes the time. My suggestion is to double (or even triple) the recipe for the base, and freeze the extra portions. Thaw it, add the fresh fish, and within ten minutes you’ll be enjoying a delicious fish soup resulting from a long-simmered base enlivened by perfectly cooked fresh fish.

Most supermarkets still display fish on chipped ice in a case rather than pre-packaging it, and they should. Fish should be kept at a lower temperature than meats. When making your fish selection, keep a few simple guidelines in mind: Above all, do not buy any fish that actually smells fishy, indicating that it is no longer fresh or hasn’t been cut or stored properly. Fresh fish has the mild, clean scent of the sea—nothing more. Look for bright, shiny colors in the fish scales, because, as a fish sits, its skin becomes more pale and dull looking. Then peer into the eyes: They should be black and beady. If they’re milky or sunken, the fish has been dead too long. And if the fish isn’t behind glass, gently poke its flesh. If the indentation remains, the fish is old.

Classic New England Clam Chowder

About fifteen years ago, I owned a catering service named Nantucket Cuisine when I lived on that island off of Cape Cod, and clients told me that the path to stardom was a spectacular clam chowder. I spent a few winter months developing this recipe, which indeed became one of my signature dishes. The secret is a lot of reduced clam juice, so the sweet flavor of the mollusks emerges from the creamy broth.

Serves 6 to 8

1 pound chopped fresh clams

4 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice

6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter, divided

1 large onion, diced

2 celery ribs, diced

2 large redskin potatoes, scrubbed and cut into ¾-inch dice

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

2 bay leaves

¼ cup all-purpose flour

1 quart half-and-half, heated

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

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In Melville's *Moby Dick*, Ishmael and Queequeg land on Nantucket and are sent to Hosea Hussey's Try Pots; the name comes from the black iron cauldron used aboard whale ships for melting blubber to liquid oil. Melville writes that the "fishiest of all fishy places was the Try Pots. Chowder for breakfast, and chowder for dinner, and chowder for supper."

Drain the clams, reserving the liquor. Refrigerate the clams until ready to use.

Combine the drained clam juice and bottled clam juice in a 4-quart soup pot, and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil over medium-high heat until reduced by two-thirds.

While the clam juice boils, heat 2 tablespoons of the butter in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Add the onion, celery, potatoes, parsley, thyme, and bay leaves to the reduced clam juice. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.

Heat the remaining butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in 2 cups of the half-and-half. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Add the thickened roux, remaining half-and-half, and the clams to the soup. Bring to a boil over medium heat, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 2 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaves, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add additional milk if the soup needs thinning after reheating.



Manhattan Clam Chowder

ADAPTED FROM JOHNNY'S HALF SHELL, WASHINGTON, DC

Ann Cashion has been a force in the Washington food scene for almost thirty years, and she has continued to grow and adapt to the city's ever-sophisticating food scene. She now boasts a James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Mid-Atlantic Region, won in 2004, and her style of honest forthright cooking is visible in her version of clam chowder.

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 pound chopped fresh clams**
- 3 slices thick-cut bacon, diced**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 3 large onions, diced**
- 4 celery ribs, diced**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 3 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves, divided**
- 3 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice**
- 2 russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch dice**
- 3 pounds ripe plum tomatoes, peeled, cored, seeded, and chopped (or substitute 3 [14.5-ounce] cans petite diced tomatoes, drained)**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- Hot red pepper sauce to taste**
- 12 to 18 littleneck clams, cleaned and scrubbed well, for garnish**
- 1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley, for garnish**

Drain the clams, reserving the liquor. Refrigerate the clams until ready to use.

Cook the bacon in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat for 5 to 7 minutes, or until crisp. Remove the bacon from the pot with a slotted spoon, and drain on paper towels. Set aside.

Add the olive oil, onions, celery, and garlic to the bacon grease in the pot. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onions are translucent. Add the reserved clam juice, half of the thyme, the bottled clam juice, and the potatoes to the pot, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, partially covered, for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the vegetables are almost tender.

Add the tomatoes and remaining thyme to the pot, and simmer for 3 minutes. Add the chopped clams, and simmer for 3 minutes, or until the clams are cooked through. Season the soup to taste with salt, pepper, and hot red pepper sauce.

To serve, bring the soup back to a simmer. Add the whole clams and cook for 2 minutes, or until the clams open. Discard any clams that do not open. Ladle the soup into bowls, and top each with two whole clams and a sprinkling of bacon and parsley.

NOTE: The soup base can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not cook the whole clams until just prior to serving.

Cans of petite-cut diced tomatoes began appearing about five years ago, and they are such a boon when cooking foods like this soup because they are the perfect size to fit on a soup spoon. If you can't find them and use larger diced tomatoes, you should chop or dice them before adding them to the soup.

Maryland Cream of Crab Soup

ADAPTED FROM LEGAL SEA FOODS, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Legal Sea Foods really began as a fish market in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1950. Eighteen years later, the Berkowitz family opened their first restaurant right next door. There are now Legal restaurants from Massachusetts to Virginia, with the bulk of them remaining in the home state. While New England clam chowder came first, this rich and velvety cream of crab soup has also been on the menu for decades.

Serves 8

- 1 quart Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter**
- 1 medium onion, chopped**
- 1 celery rib, chopped**
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour**
- 2 teaspoons Old Bay seasoning, plus more for garnish**
- 1 quart heavy cream**
- 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice**
- Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste**
- 1 pound jumbo lump crab meat, picked over**
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh chives for garnish**

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Pre-picked-over crabmeat from the seafood department is a tremendous time-saver, but it's far from perfect. The best way to ensure that no shell fragments find their way into a dish is to spread out the crab on a dark-colored plate. You'll see many fragments against the dark background and can pick them out easily. Then rub the morsels between your fingers to check for more, being careful not to break up large lumps. Unless you have a shellfish allergy, please don't substitute imitation crabmeat, actually made from pollock, for real crabmeat.

Place the stock in a saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium-high, and boil until the liquid is reduced by half. Set aside.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion and celery, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Reduce the heat to low. Stir in the flour and Old Bay and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the reduced stock. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 2 minutes.

Stir in the cream, and bring the mixture back to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Stir in the lemon juice and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, divide the crab meat into heated soup bowls and ladle the soup over it. Garnish each serving with chives and a sprinkling of Old Bay.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Creamy Clam Chowder with Smoked Potatoes and Chorizo

ADAPTED FROM DOVETAIL, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

John Fraser serves this with a homemade croissant made with lots of black pepper, but you can add a healthy dose of pepper to the soup to replicate the flavor. Smoking the potatoes imparts the same nuance that most cooks achieve by adding bacon to chowder.

Serves 6 to 8

½ cup applewood chips

3 dozen Manila clams

½ cup kosher salt or sea salt

3 large redskin potatoes

1½ cups dry white wine

3 sprigs fresh thyme

1 bay leaf

1 tablespoon white peppercorns

¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter

2 carrots, diced

4 celery ribs, diced

1 large sweet onion, such as Vidalia or Bermuda, diced

2 leeks, white parts only, halved lengthwise, thinly sliced, and rinsed well

¼ cup all-purpose flour

3 cups heavy cream, heated

3 cups whole milk, heated

Juice of 1½ lemons

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

6 to 8 tablespoons chopped hard Spanish chorizo, for garnish

Light a charcoal or gas grill. If using a charcoal grill, soak the wood chips in cold water for 30 minutes. If using a gas grill, wrap the dry wood chips in a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil (18 x 12 inches), create a packet to encase the chips, and poke holes in the top of the packet.

While the grill is heating, scrub the clams well under cold running water with a wire brush. Place them in a mixing bowl, cover them with cold water, and stir in the salt. Let the clams sit for 30 minutes, then remove them from the bowl with a slotted spoon and transfer them to a heavy pot. Discard any clams that are not tightly shut.

When the grill is hot, cut the potatoes into 1-inch-thick slices. If using a charcoal grill, drain the chips and sprinkle them over the hot coals. If using a gas grill, place the packet on top of the burners. Smoke the potatoes for 5 minutes per side. When cool enough to handle, dice the potatoes and set aside.

Add the wine, thyme, bay leaf, and peppercorns to the pot with the clams. Place the pot over high heat and cook the clams for 5 to 7 minutes, tightly covered, or until they open. After three minutes, shake the pot without opening it to redistribute the clams. Discard any clams that didn't open, and remove the clams from the pot with a slotted spoon. Strain the broth through a sieve lined with cheesecloth or a paper coffee filter, and set aside. When cool enough to handle, remove the clams from their shells, and refrigerate until needed.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the carrots, celery, onion, and leeks. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and cook the vegetables for 10 minutes, or until almost tender.

Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the cream and milk. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 20 minutes. Add the diced potatoes, reserved clam and lemon juice, and cook for an additional 10 minutes. Add the reserved clams, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, ladle the hot soup into bowls and sprinkle each serving with 1 tablespoon of the chorizo.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add additional milk if the soup becomes needs thinning after reheating.

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Clams should be kept at a temperature no colder than 45°F for more than a couple of hours or they will begin to open and lose their freshness. To clean clams, place them in a medium bowl and fill it with cold water an inch or two above the clams. Add 1 tablespoon of kosher salt or sea salt per quart of water, but do not use table salt; the iodine in table salt will kill the clams before they are cooked. Allow the clams to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes. Gently remove the clams individually from the bowl without disturbing the sediment at the bottom of the bowl. Run them under cold water and gently scrub the surface of the clam with a vegetable brush to remove any sand stuck to the shell.

Old Charleston She-Crab Soup

ADAPTED FROM SOUTH CITY KITCHEN, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Along with soups made with oysters and terrapin, crab soups were once the elegant way to begin a dinner party in the southern states. She-crab soup is almost a cross between a bisque and a chowder; food historians say that it is an adaptation of an eighteenth-century soup brought to the colony by Scottish immigrants.

Serves 6 to 8

- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup Seafood Stock (page 000) or bottled clam juice
- 1 quart whole milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ tablespoons Old Bay seasoning
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ cup dry sherry
- ½ pound lump crabmeat, picked over
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Hot red pepper sauce to taste

Melt the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes, or until the vegetables soften.

Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the stock. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 2 minutes. Stir in the milk, cream, Worcestershire sauce, Old Bay, bay leaf, and nutmeg. Bring to a boil over medium heat, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes.

Remove and discard the bay leaf. Allow the soup to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, you may have to work in batches.

Stir in the sherry and crab and bring the soup back to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup for 5 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt, pepper, and hot red pepper sauce. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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Blue crabs can be found along the Atlantic Coast from Georgia north to Maine. The only way to tell the difference between male and females is to look at their “apron” or abdomen covering. Females have a wider plate, while males have a thinner plate. Fishermen have names to designate the different ages and genders of these crabs. Males are called “Jimmies,” young females are called “Sallies,” and mature females are called “she crabs.”

Crab and Oyster Chowder

ADAPTED FROM PIKE PLACE CHOWDER, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Each day Pike Place Chowder creates eight fresh chowders, and this one was awarded first place in the 2012 West Coast Chowder Cook-off. The creamy base is enlivened with the spices of fresh chorizo sausage as well as Old Bay seasoning. Serve it with Pretzel Rolls (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

- 2 medium redskin potatoes, halved
- 1 pint fresh oysters, drained, liquor reserved
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter
- 2 ounces fresh chorizo sausage, removed from the casings if necessary
- 3 leeks, white parts only, halved, thinly sliced, and well rinsed
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon Old Bay seasoning
- 2 quarts half-and-half, heated
- ⅔ cup fresh corn kernels
- ¾ pound fresh crab meat, picked over
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 ripe plum tomato, cored, seeded, and chopped, for garnish
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Cover the potatoes with salted water and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil the potatoes for 7 to 10 minutes, or until just tender. Drain the potatoes, and when cool enough to handle, cut them into ½-inch dice. Set aside.

Cut the oysters into bite-sized pieces, and refrigerate until ready to use.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Crumble the chorizo into the pot, and cook for 2 minutes. Add the leeks and cook for 3 minutes, or until the leeks are translucent. Stir in the flour and Old Bay. Cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the half-and-half. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the potatoes, oysters, corn, and crab to the soup. Simmer for 2 minutes, or until the oysters are cooked through. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, ladle the soup into bowls and sprinkle each serving with tomato and parsley.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally, but do not let it boil. Add additional half-and-half if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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Oysters and clams turn into little bits of rubber if they’re overcooked, which unfortunately is their fate much of the time. That’s why it’s important to cook these oysters for only the two minutes specified, and to not allow the soup to boil again if you’re reheating it.

Gumbo *D'herbes* with Oysters

ADAPTED FROM HAVEN, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Houston, close to the Gulf of Mexico, has a heritage of Creole cooking as well as Southwestern cuisine, and that is what chef Randy Evans taps for this gumbo garnished with cornmeal-crust oysters. To continue in the Creole tradition, serve this with Skillet Cornbread (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 pint shucked fresh oysters, with liquor
- ½ cup vegetable oil (or substitute strained bacon grease), divided
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 celery ribs, chopped
- 2 small green bell peppers, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
- 2 small turnips, peeled and chopped
- 8 scallions, white parts and 5 inches of green tops, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 cups firmly packed chopped fresh greens (some combination of collard greens, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, spinach, escarole, and Swiss chard)
- 4 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons filé powder
- 6 cups Chicken Stock (page 000), Vegetable Stock (page 000), or purchased stock
- 4 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 bay leaves
- ¼ pound fresh okra, trimmed and sliced (about 1 cup)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Hot red pepper sauce to taste
- Vegetable oil for frying
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- Chopped scallion greens, for garnish

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Drain the oysters, reserving the liquor. Refrigerate the oysters and liquor separately.

Combine 6 tablespoons of the oil and the flour in a 4-quart soup pot. Bake the roux for 20 to 30 minutes, or until walnut brown, stirring occasionally.

Remove the pot from the oven, and add the onion, celery, green pepper, turnips, scallions, and garlic. Cook over low heat for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the greens, and cook for 5 minutes, or until the greens wilt. Stir in the thyme and filé powder. Whisk in the stock gradually, then add the reserved oyster liquor, Worcestershire sauce, parsley, and bay leaves. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, partially covered, for 1 hour.

While the soup simmers, heat the remaining oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the okra, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the okra is crisp-tender. Add the okra to the soup, and cook for an additional 3 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaves. Season the soup to taste with salt, pepper, and hot red pepper sauce.

For the garnish, heat 1 inch of oil in a deep-sided skillet over medium-high heat to a temperature of 350°F. Sprinkle the oysters with salt and pepper, and dredge them in the cornmeal. Fry the oysters for 1 minute per side, or until browned. Drain on paper towels.

To serve, ladle the hot soup into shallow bowls, and top each bowl with a few fried oysters and a sprinkling of scallion greens.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not prepare the garnish until just prior to serving.

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Filé powder, pronounced *FE-lay* like a fish fillet, is one of the key ingredients in traditional gumbo; in fact it's sometimes sold as gumbo file. It's made from the dried and ground leaves of the sassafras tree and it serves as a thickening agent in gumbo, used either in tandem or in place of okra. It was introduced by the Choctaw Inidan tribes, and it adds an earthy, somewhat spicy flavor to dishes.

White Miso Soup with Mussels and Chiles

ADAPTED FROM RIOJA, DENVER, COLORADO

Chef-owner Jennifer Jasinski, winner of the James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Southwest in 2013, competed on *Top Chef Masters* on the Bravo cable network and is head of three restaurants in Denver. While Rioja was named for the Spanish wine, many of her menu items have an Asian influence, like this soup made with ginger, white miso, and mirin.

Serves 6 to 8

2 quarts Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

2 ounces fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped

4 ounces (½ cup) white miso paste

¾ cup mirin

½ cup granulated sugar

1 jalapeño chile, stemmed and very thinly sliced

1 Fresno chile (or substitute 1 additional jalapeño chile), stemmed and very thinly sliced

3 tablespoons canola oil

¼ pound fresh hon shimeji mushrooms (or substitute oyster mushrooms), wiped with a damp paper towel and sliced if large

1½ pounds fresh mussels

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

¼ cup firmly packed fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish

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Hon shimeji are delicate mushrooms with tiny brown smooth caps that top slender ivory stems. They are always served cooked because they have a harsh and bitter flavor when raw. Hon shimeji hold their shape well when cooked, which is why chefs enjoy using them in soups and stir-fries.

Combine the stock, ginger, miso paste, and mirin in a 4-quart soup pot, and stir well. Bring to a boil over medium heat, then reduce the heat to low, and simmer the mixture, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Keep warm.

While the stock simmers, combine the sugar and ½ cup water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add the jalapeño and Fresno chiles to the pan, and bring back to a boil. Turn off the heat, and allow the pepper slices to steep for 15 minutes. Remove the peppers from the pan with a slotted spoon and set aside. Discard the soaking liquid. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the mushrooms are tender. Set aside. Add the mushrooms to the stock.

Scrub the mussels well under cold running water. Scrape off any barnacles from the shells, and scrape off the beard with a paring knife. The mussels should close tightly when tapped on a counter. Discard any mussels that do not.

Add the mussels to the soup, and bring to a boil over high heat. Cover the pot and cook the mussels for 3 minutes, or until they open. Discard any mussels that did not open. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, arrange the mussels in low soup bowls, and ladle the broth and mushrooms over them. Garnish each serving with some of the chiles and the cilantro leaves, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup and chiles can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat the soup over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not cook the mussels until just prior to serving.

Classic Oyster Stew

ADAPTED FROM THE HOPE CLUB, PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Chef Jay Hollen has been making this stew on Fridays at this venerable private club for more than twenty years. I've added a few vegetables to further enrich the creamy broth.

Serves 6 to 8

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter

1 large leek, white part only, chopped and rinsed well

2 celery ribs, chopped

1 carrot, chopped

6 cups (1½ quarts) light cream

2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce or to taste

½ teaspoon hot red pepper sauce or to taste

2 pints shucked fresh oysters, with liquor

Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste

2 teaspoons paprika (optional)

Melt the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-low heat. Add the leek, celery, and carrot. Cook, stirring frequently, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the vegetables soften. Add the cream, Worcestershire sauce, and hot red pepper sauce. Heat over low heat to a simmer. Simmer the mixture for 2 minutes.

As the cream heats, strain the oysters, reserving their liquor, and set aside. Strain the oyster liquor through a sieve lined with a paper coffee filter.

Place the oysters and the strained liquor in a deep skillet over low heat. Heat the oysters until the liquor begins to come to a simmer and the edges of the oysters are curled. Do not allow them to boil or they will become rubbery.

Pour the oysters and their liquor into the pot with the soup, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Divide the oysters among shallow soup bowls, and ladle the soup over them. Serve immediately, sprinkling each serving with paprika, if using.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not cook the oysters or add them to the soup until just prior to serving.

The only tricky part to making oyster stew is the proper cooking of the oysters. If they're not cooked enough, certain enzymes in them will still be active and they will cause the cream to curdle. But if they're overcooked it's like chewing little pillows of rubber bands. The best visual clues to perfection are to watch for the oyster liquor to just come to a simmer and for the oysters to look plump with curled edges.

Shrimp Ball Soup

ADAPTED FROM SUSANNA FOO'S GOURMET KITCHEN, RADNOR, PENNSYLVANIA

These shrimp balls are like light fluffy clouds floating in a richly flavored simple stock. The "secret" is that the egg whites binding the shrimp mixture are beaten first into a meringue. This is a truly elegant way to start any Asian meal.

Serves 6 to 8

1½ pounds peeled and deveined shrimp

1½ teaspoons kosher salt, or to taste

1 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper, divided

1½ tablespoons vodka

1½ tablespoons heavy cream

2 teaspoons Asian sesame oil

3 large egg whites, at room temperature

¼ teaspoon cream of tartar

3 quarts Shrimp Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

2 ripe plum tomatoes, cored, seeded, and chopped

1 celery rib, chopped

The trend of using small amounts of vodka in dishes has been growing exponentially over the last few years. The high percentage of alcohol in vodka means that it adds liquid to a recipe without adding water. In the case of pie crust, that causes less gluten formation, so the crust is more tender and flaky than one made with water. In the case of these shrimp balls, the vodka stabilizes the egg whites.

Combine the shrimp, salt, ⅓ teaspoon of the pepper, vodka, cream, and sesame oil in a food processor fitted with the steel blade or in a blender. Purée until smooth. Scrape the mixture into a large mixing bowl.

Place the egg whites in a grease-free mixing bowl and beat at medium speed with an electric mixer until frothy. Add the cream of tartar, raise the speed to high, and beat until stiff peaks form.

Fold the meringue into the shrimp mixture. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or until firm.

While the shrimp mixture chills, bring the stock to a boil in a 4-quart soup pot over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium, and reduce the stock by one-third. Add the remaining pepper, tomato, and celery to the pot, and simmer for 3 minutes.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat, and then reduce the heat so that the water is just simmering. Form the shrimp mixture into 1-inch balls using a pastry bag or a tablespoon dipped in cold water. Cook the shrimp balls for 2 minutes, or until they have doubled in size and float to the surface of the simmering water.

Remove the shrimp balls from the water with a slotted spoon, and add them to the soup. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup and the shrimp mixture can be prepared up to 1 day in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat the soup over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not cook the shrimp balls until just prior to serving.

Billi Bi

Mussels are mollusks that are frequently overlooked in cookbooks and on restaurant menus, and there's no reason why. They make a fabulous creamy soup with undertones of herbs and wine, thickened with some egg. You can serve this hot or cold, but I prefer it hot.

Serves 6 to 8

2 pounds mussels

2 shallots, diced

1 small onion, diced

3 parsley sprigs

1 sprig fresh thyme

1 bay leaf

6 to 10 black peppercorns

1 cup dry white wine or ¾ cup dry white vermouth

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, divided

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 quart Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased clam juice, heated

1 large egg yolk

1 cup heavy cream

Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Scrub the mussels well under cold running water. Scrape off any barnacles from the shells, and scrape off the beard with a paring knife. The mussels should close tightly when tapped on a counter. Discard any mussels that do not.

Combine the mussels, shallots, onion, parsley, thyme, bay leaf, peppercorns, wine, and 1 tablespoon of the butter in a Dutch oven. Place the pot over high heat and cook the mussels, covered, for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the mussels open. Shake the pot a few times during the cooking to redistribute the mussels, but do not uncover the pot.

Remove the mussels from the pot with a slotted spoon. Discard any mussels that did not open. When cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the mussel shells. Refrigerate the mussels if the soup will not be served as soon as it is completed.

Strain the liquid in a colander lined with a double layer of cheesecloth, pressing the solids to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard the solids, and set aside the liquid.

Heat the remaining butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the stock and reserved mussel liquid. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup over low heat for 5 minutes.

Beat the egg yolk with the cream, and whisk in about 1 cup of the hot soup. Then beat the yolk mixture back into the pot and turn off the heat. Do not allow the soup to boil. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, reheat the mussels in the soup, if necessary. Ladle into bowls, sprinkling each serving with parsley.

NOTE: The mussels can be steamed up to 2 days in advance. Refrigerate the mussels and strained juice separately. Beginning with heating the remaining butter, complete the soup just prior to serving.

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While this creamy mussel broth comes from the coast of Brittany, its name has been puzzling to food historians since the early-twentieth century, when it became popular at the famed Maxim's restaurant in Paris. Most authorities now agree that Chef Louis Barthe named the dish for American tin-plating magnate William B. (Billi Bi) Leeds, who spent much of his time in Paris and died there in 1908.

Shrimp Bisque

ADAPTED FROM EPICURE MARKET & CAFÉ, MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

The key to this flavor of this classic French soup, created by specialty chef Michael Love, is the richly-flavored shrimp stock. Serve this with an interesting bread like Pretzel Rolls (page 000) or Focaccia (page 000) and a tossed salad to transform it into a meal.

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 pound medium raw shrimp in shells**
- 2 quarts Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter**
- 1 leek, white and pale green part only, thinly sliced and rinsed well**
- 2 carrots, diced**
- 2 celery ribs, diced**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste**
- Pinch of cayenne**
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- ½ cup cream sherry**
- 1 cup whole milk**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste**

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Cooking food gently in water or a sauce that is just at the boiling point and barely simmering is called poaching. This cooking method ensures tenderness, whether it's a poached egg or a fish steak.

Peel and devein the shrimp, reserving the shells and heads, if attached. Refrigerate the shrimp until needed, tightly covered with plastic wrap.

Bring the shells and stock to a boil in a 4-quart soup pot over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the stock, uncovered, for 45 minutes, or until reduced by half. Skim the scum that rises to the top of the pot for the first 15 minutes of the cooking time. Strain the stock, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Set aside, and keep warm. Rinse out the pot.

Heat the butter in the pot over medium heat. Add the leeks, and cook for 5 minutes, or until the leeks soften. Add the carrots and celery and cook for an additional 5 minutes, or until the vegetables soften. Do not allow the vegetables to brown. Add the garlic, tomato paste, and cayenne. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, add the sherry, and reduce by half. Add the shrimp stock and continue to whisk. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Add the milk and simmer the soup for 10 minutes.

Strain the soup, pressing the solids with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Return the liquid to the pot. Place the raw shrimp in a metal strainer and lower the strainer into the soup. Poach the shrimp for 2 minutes, or until still slightly translucent in the center. Remove the shrimp and set aside. Add the cream, and simmer the soup for 10 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, arrange 4 or 5 shrimp in each bowl, and ladle bisque over them.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add additional milk if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Lobster Bisque

Lobster bisque, drawn from classic French cuisine, is an elegant first course for any meal and my version is rather classic. It's pink from both paprika and tomato, and laced with a bit of dry sherry. While the actual recipe is very simple, the key to its flavor is a rich stock made from lobster bodies and shells.

Serves 6 to 8

- 4 quarts Lobster Stock (page 000)**
- 1 onion, sliced**
- 1 head of garlic, cut in half crosswise**
- 3 tomatoes, seeded and diced**
- 2 tablespoons fresh tarragon**
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme**
- 3 sprigs fresh parsley**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 10 whole black peppercorns**
- ¾ cup dry sherry, divided**
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter**
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 tablespoon mild paprika**
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste**
- 2 cups half-and-half**
- ½ pound lobster meat, finely diced**
- Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste**

Combine the lobster stock with the onion, garlic, tomatoes, tarragon, thyme, parsley, bay leaf, peppercorns, and ½ cup of the sherry in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to medium, and boil until the liquid has reduced to 1 quart. Strain the stock, pushing on the solids with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard the solids, and set the liquid aside.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over low heat. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Stir in the paprika and tomato paste and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the reserved stock and remaining sherry. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes. Whisk in the half-and-half, and simmer for 2 minutes. Stir in the lobster meat, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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Lobster stock is a reason to make friends with your local fishmonger. Most fish markets today (if you're lucky enough to have one near you that sells only fish) frequently cook up lobsters to sell the meat at an exorbitant price. The shop will either give you the bodies if you're a good customer, or sell them to you at a nominal charge, like one dollar apiece.

Lobster Coconut Bisque with Sizzling Rice

ADAPTED FROM FEARING'S, DALLAS, TEXAS

While famed chef Dean Fearing serves this Asian soup as an appetizer, I usually add some diced lobster meat and serve it with a salad tossed with a rice vinegar dressing for a light supper. This is Dean's variation on the famed Thai chicken and coconut soup, and the rice adds texture as well as flavor.

Serves 6 to 8

BISQUE

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 lemongrass stalk, trimmed and chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- 1 quart Lobster Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 2 (15-ounce) cans coconut milk
- 1 cup cooked white rice
- 1 tablespoon *tom kha* paste
- 2 kaffir lime leaves
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Freshly squeezed lime juice to taste
- ¾ pound cooked lobster meat, diced (optional)
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

SIZZLING RICE

- 2 cups medium-grain white rice, rinsed well
- 2 tablespoons seasoned rice wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- ½ small onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup chopped carrot
- ½ cup chopped green bell pepper
- ¼ cup fresh peas
- 1 tablespoon reduced-sodium soy sauce

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, ginger, lemongrass, and celery. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the stock, coconut milk, rice, and *tom kha* paste, and stir well. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes, stirring frequently.

Allow the soup to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, you may have to work in batches.

Add the lime leaves and fish sauce and simmer for an additional 10 minutes. Remove and discard the lime leaves. Season the soup to taste with salt, pepper, and lime juice.

While the soup simmers, prepare the rice. Combine the rice and 2 ½ cups cold water in a saucepan, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the rice, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Cover the pot tightly and turn off the heat. Allow the rice to stand, covered, for 10 minutes.

Turn the rice out onto a baking sheet, breaking up lumps with a fork. Sprinkle the rice with the vinegar, and allow the rice to cool.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the pan evenly. Add the onion, garlic, and ginger, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook for 2 minutes, or until fragrant. Stir in the carrot, bell pepper, and peas. Cook for 2 minutes, and scrape the mixture into a mixing bowl.

Return the skillet to the heat and add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil, swirling to coat the pan evenly. Add the rice, sprinkle with the soy sauce, and stir-fry for 2 minutes. Allow the rice to cook undisturbed for 2 minutes, or until it gets crunchy on the bottom. Stir in the vegetables, break up the rice clumps, and cook for 1 minute to reheat the vegetables. Season the rice to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, divide the sizzling rice and lobster meat, if used, into bowls, and top with the bisque. Sprinkle with cilantro.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not prepare the sizzling rice until just prior to serving.

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While ginger and lemongrass are relatively easy to find in most supermarkets, the same cannot be said for fresh kaffir lime leaves, an essential ingredient for many Thai dishes. You can substitute one teaspoon of grated lime zest for each two kaffir lime leaves listed in a recipe.

Seafood Okra Gumbo

ADAPTED FROM MR. B'S BISTRO, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

You can't be a restaurant in New Orleans and not have gumbo on the menu. Gumbo is said to have originated from bouillabaisse, the French fish soup, but it's really Louisiana in a bowl. It may have started as a fish soup, it's evolved to include a roux and native ingredients such as filé powder, andouille sausage, rice, and okra. Serve this with Buttermilk Biscuits (page 000).

Serves 8 to 10

- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 green bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 2 quarts Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 2 pounds okra, sliced into ½-inch slices
- 1½ pounds gumbo crab or blue crab, hard-shell tops and gills removed, halved, and claws cracked with back of a chef's knife
- 2 cups canned, crushed tomatoes in tomato purée
- 2 tablespoons filé powder
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt or to taste
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 pounds medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 pint oysters, with liquor
- ½ pound lump crabmeat, picked over
- Hot red pepper sauce to taste
- Cooked white rice, hot, for serving
- 3 scallions, white parts and 4 inches of green tops, thinly sliced, for garnish

Heat the oil in an 8-quart soup pot over high heat. Stir in the flour, reduce the heat to low, and cook the roux for 6 to 8 minutes, or until medium brown.

Add the green bell pepper and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly. Add the onion and celery, and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly. Gradually whisk in the stock, whisking to prevent lumps from forming. Add the okra, crab, tomatoes, filé, salt, garlic, bay leaves, black pepper, red pepper flakes, chili powder, and thyme and bring to a boil. Simmer the gumbo, uncovered, for 1¼ hours, stirring occasionally.

Add the shrimp, oysters with their liquor, and crabmeat. Simmer the gumbo for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the edges of the oysters have curled. Adjust the seasoning with salt and hot sauce. To serve, ladle the gumbo over rice, and sprinkle with the scallions.

NOTE: The gumbo base can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Cook the seafood in the soup just prior to serving.

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The actual term "gumbo" is derived from the African word for okra, which is *gombo*. Okra is a natural in soup because it thickens, transforming soup into more of a stew. Okra is now being touted as one of the "super-veggies" like kale and broccoli. A cup contains only 30 calories, and it is very high in vitamin K, vitamin C, calcium, folate, and fiber.

Mixed Seafood Soup (Huatape de Mariscos)

ADAPTED FROM KOMALI, DALLAS, TEXAS

Abraham Salum's Komali is an authentically Mexican restaurant in a sea of Tex-Mex. The restaurant's name is an Aztec word for the open griddle used to make tortillas. The food focuses on delicate flavors like those from tomatillos, used in this flavorful soup. Serve it with corn tortillas and a salad made with jicama.

Serves 6

- 10 tomatillos, husked, rinsed, and cored
- 2 tablespoons corn oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves
- 3 avocado leaves (or substitute 2 bay leaves and 1 teaspoon crushed fennel seed)
- 3 serrano chiles, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
- 2 cups Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- ¼ cup masa harina
- 12 peeled and deveined extra-large (16 to 20 per pound) raw shrimp
- 12 mussels, scrubbed and debearded
- ½ pound bay scallops
- ½ pound thick white-fleshed fish fillet, such as cod or snapper, diced
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Chopped onion, for garnish
- Chopped fresh epazote or cilantro leaves, for garnish

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Avocado leaves (*hoja de aguacate*) are used extensively in the cooking of Oaxaca and Puebla, and they give foods a mild licorice taste. You can usually find them dried in the Latino aisle of supermarkets, but to find them fresh—unless you live near the Mexican border—is more of a problem. Famed chef Rick Bayless suggests a combination of bay leaves and crushed fennel seed as a substitution.

Heat a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Place the tomatillos in the pan and roast them, turning them gently with tongs, until they are golden brown and start to break down. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside.

Heat the oil in 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and avocado leaves, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the tomatillos, chiles, and stock to the pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes.

Allow the soup to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, this may have to be done in batches.

Stir the masa harina into ½ cup of cold water, and add that to the soup. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the mixture for 5 minutes.

Add the shrimp, mussels, scallops, and fish to the pot. Cover the pot and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the mussels open. Discard any mussels that do not open. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with some chopped onion and chopped epazote.

NOTE: The soup base can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating. Do not cook the seafood in the soup until just prior to serving.



Johnny's Fish Chowder

ADAPTED FROM JOHNNY'S HALF SHELL, WASHINGTON, DC

This chowder contains a cornucopia of fresh vegetables, ranging from onion and turnip to summer squash, so it really fits the definition of a one-pot meal. Serve it with Focaccia (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

2 slices bacon, diced

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion, diced

2 celery ribs, diced

1 large turnip, peeled and diced

1 large redskin potato, diced

5 garlic cloves, minced

3 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves

4 cups Fish Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

6 large ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped (or substitute 1 [28-ounce] can diced tomatoes, drained)

1½ cups diced yellow summer squash

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1½ pounds fresh seafood (some combination of bite-sized pieces of firm-fleshed white fish, shrimp, diced clams, and shucked oysters)

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Cook the bacon in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat for 5 to 7 minutes, or until crisp. Remove the bacon from the pot with a slotted spoon, and drain on paper towels. Set aside.

Add the olive oil to the rendered bacon fat. Add the onion and celery and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the turnip, potato, and garlic, and cook for 2 minutes.

Add the thyme, stock, and tomatoes, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Add the summer squash and cook for an additional 10 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.

Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Add the seafood, and bring the soup back to a boil. Simmer the soup for 1 minute. Cover the pot and remove the pot from the heat. Allow the pot to sit for 5 minutes, then serve immediately, sprinkling each serving with parsley.

NOTE: The soup base can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until it comes to a boil. Cook the seafood just prior to serving.

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If you're buying fresh minced clams or oysters for a soup, always drain the seafood and add the juices to your fish or seafood stock. At that point they're free as well as flavorful.

Carolina Fish Muddle

ADAPTED FROM ZINGERMAN'S DELI, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

Every culture and cuisine has its own thick and hearty fish stew, and this one hails from the Outer Banks of North Carolina. There's a smoky undertone from the bacon in the tomato broth, which is thick from the potatoes that literally fall apart while it cooks.

Serves 6 to 8

- ½ pound sliced bacon, diced
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 1 large leek, white part only, thinly sliced and rinsed well
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 pounds fresh plum tomatoes, cored, seeded, and chopped (or substitute 1 [28-ounce] can diced tomatoes, undrained)
- ¼ pound unsliced bacon
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 5 cups Fish Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- ½ pound pollock or other inexpensive white ocean fish, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1½ pounds Yukon Gold or other waxy potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice
- 1 pound striped bass or other full-flavored ocean fish, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 pound cod or other flaky white ocean fish, cut into 1-inch chunks
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 6 to 8 slices good crusty bread

Cook the diced bacon in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat for 5 to 7 minutes, or until crisp. Remove the bacon from the pot with a slotted spoon, and drain on paper towels. Set aside. Reserve 3 to 4 tablespoons of the bacon fat, and set aside.

Add the onions, leeks, carrots, and celery to the bacon grease remaining in the pot. Cook, stirring frequently, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the vegetables soften. Add the garlic and bay leaf. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Add the tomatoes, bacon chunk, thyme, red pepper flakes, and parsley. Cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes. Add the stock, pollock, and potatoes, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally.

Reduce the heat to low, and cook the muddle, partially covered, for 1½ hours, or until the potatoes and fish have fallen apart and the texture is very thick.

Add the striped bass and cod, and cook, covered, for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the fish is cooked through and flakes easily. Remove and discard the bay leaf and bacon chunk. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

While the fish is cooking, toast the bread slices and rub each with some of the reserved bacon grease. To serve, ladle the muddle into low bowls, and top each with a toast slice. Sprinkle each bowl with some of the reserved bacon, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup base can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not add the fish or toast the bread until just prior to serving.

Variation

Poach 6 to 8 eggs and place them on top of the toast before serving.

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With fillets, run your fingers in every direction along the top of the fillet before cooking to feel for any pesky little bones. You can remove bones easily in two ways. Larger bones will come out if they're stroked with a vegetable peeler, and you can pull out smaller bones with tweezers. This is not a long process, but it's a gesture that will be greatly appreciated by all who eat the fish.

Salmon Congee

ADAPTED FROM SUSANNA FOO'S GOURMET KITCHEN, RADNOR, PENNSYLVANIA

Congee is a rice chowder that's part of all Asian cuisines, and with the diversity of Chinese cuisines, there are many versions in that vast nation alone. Also called *jook*, congee always includes rice cooked in a large amount of stock so that it falls apart and thickens; the nature of the stock and other ingredients are what gives it a distinct flavor. In this case, delicate salmon is the star, and it cooks from the heat of the soup.

Serves 6 to 8

¾ pound skinless salmon fillet

3 tablespoons vodka

2 tablespoons soy sauce

¼ cup vegetable oil, divided

2 celery ribs, finely chopped

5 shallots, minced

1 large jalapeño or serrano chile, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped

2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger

½ cup glutinous rice, rinsed well

⅓ pound raw peeled and deveined shrimp, finely chopped

10 cups Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

¼ cup chopped fresh Thai basil, for garnish

Combine the salmon, vodka, soy sauce, and 1 tablespoon oil in a heavy resealable plastic bag. Refrigerate for 30 minutes, turning the bag occasionally.

Heat the remaining oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the celery, shallots, chile, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the shallots are translucent. Add the rice, shrimp, and stock to the pot. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, covered, for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the rice is tender.

While the soup simmers, remove the salmon from the marinade and cut it into ¼-inch-thick slices against the grain. Discard the marinade.

Stir in the lemon juice, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. To serve, arrange the salmon slices on the bottom of heated soup bowls, and ladle the simmering soup over the top. Serve immediately, garnishing each plate with basil.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not marinate or slice the salmon until just prior to serving.

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Don't be confused by the name. Glutinous rice, like all species of rice, contains no gluten. What distinguishes this rice, grown in Southeast Asia, is its sticky quality that comes from its chemical composition. The two components of starch are amylose and amylopectin, and glutinous rice has almost none of the former while the latter is what makes it so sticky. Glutinous rice is ground into a flour that is cooked into a gel for some dishes.



Seafood Minestrone with Herb Oil

This hearty soup contains the large variety of vegetables found in other Italian minestrone soups. But the herb oil drizzled over it before serving adds both aroma and flavor. Serve it with a crusty loaf of Garlic and Cheese Bread (page 000).

Serves 4 to 6

SOUP

- ¼ pound small shells or other small pasta
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 large carrot, sliced
- ½ fennel bulb, trimmed, and diced
- 2 cups firmly packed shredded green cabbage
- 5 cups Seafood Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 medium zucchini, diced
- ½ (15-ounce) can white cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 pound thick white firm-fleshed fish fillets, rinsed and cut into 1-inch cubes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish

HERB OIL

- ¾ cup firmly packed parsley leaves
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain, and set aside.

While the water heats, heat the olive oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, carrot, fennel, and cabbage. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until onion is translucent. Add the stock, tomatoes, parsley, oregano, thyme, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring occasionally.

Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, partially covered, for 10 minutes. Add the zucchini and cannellini beans, and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the vegetables are almost tender. Add the fish, cover the pot, and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, or until fish is cooked and flakes easily. Remove and discard the bay leaf, add the pasta, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

While the soup simmers, prepare the herb oil. Combine the parsley, garlic, Italian seasoning, and oil in a food processor fitted with the steel blade or in a blender. Purée until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and scrape the mixture into a bowl.

To serve, ladle the soup into bowls, and pass the herb oil and Parmesan cheese separately.

NOTE: The soup base can be prepared up to 1 day in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, covered, until hot, stirring occasionally. Cook the fish and add the pasta just prior to serving.

Variation

Substitute 3 (6-ounce) cans light tuna, drained, for the fish.

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Fresh fennel, sometimes called anise in supermarkets, has a slightly licorice taste but the texture of celery—both raw and cooked. You can always substitute 2 celery ribs for each ½ fennel bulb specified in a recipe.

Smoked Salmon Chowder

ADAPTED FROM PIKE PLACE CHOWDER, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

The Northwest is known for its smoked salmon, and that tantalizing flavor is augmented with smoked salt here so it really comes through. Serve this chowder with Popovers (page 000) and a salad of raw fennel dressed with lemon juice.

Serves 8 to 10

- 1½ pounds cold-smoked salmon
- 1 tablespoon smoked salt
- ½ pound (2 medium) redskin potatoes, halved
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 large sweet onion, such as Vidalia or Bermuda, diced
- 3 celery ribs, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 6 cups half-and-half, heated
- ½ cup tomato paste
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, at room temperature, diced
- ¾ cup capers, drained and rinsed
- Salt and coarsely ground black pepper to taste

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There are eight species of salmon. They're divided by those that live in the Atlantic Ocean and their brethren who live in the northern parts of the Pacific Ocean. All the Atlantic salmon belong to the genus *Salmo*, while Pacific salmon belong to the genus *Oncorhynchus*. The ones from the Pacific are far more varied with names including Chinook, chum, coho, and sockeye.

Break the salmon into bite-sized pieces and arrange them in a mixing bowl. Sprinkle them with the smoked salt, and cover them with 3 cups of cold water. Refrigerate the salmon for at least 8 hours, or preferably overnight. Drain the salmon, reserving the soaking water.

Cover the potatoes with salted water and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil the potatoes for 7 to 10 minutes, or until just tender. Drain the potatoes, and when cool enough to handle, cut them into ½-inch dice. Set aside.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Slowly whisk in the reserved salmon soaking water and half-and-half. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Whisk in the tomato paste and cream cheese. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Stir in the capers and salmon, and simmer for 5 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add additional milk if the soup becomes needs thinning after reheating.

7

Chicken and Other Poultry Soups

Chicken goes with soup the way bread goes with butter. The words are permanently linked in our minds and in our bowls. Chicken soups are the ultimate comfort food. You don't see Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen writing books titled *Gazpacho for the Soul*, do you?

It doesn't matter if the temperature in the air is the same 101°F that your thermometer is registering for your fever. If you're sick, you want a steaming bowl of chicken soup.

That's true around the world, too. That's why the recipes in this chapter run the gamut from Asian to Hispanic cuisines and from soups based on clear broth to soups rich with cream.

Health Benefits

There is evidence to support the idea that chicken stock really does have medicinal qualities; perhaps your grandma was right all along. In 2000, University of Nebraska Medical Center researcher Dr. Stephen Rennard published a study printed in the international medical journal *Chest*—the *Cardiopulmonary and Critical Care Journal*—stating that chicken soup contains a number of substances, including an anti-inflammatory mechanism, that ease the symptoms of upper respiratory tract infections. Other studies showed that the chicken soup was equally medicinal if made without vegetables; it was the chicken itself.

Another study, conducted by researchers at Mount Sinai Hospital in Miami and published in *Chest* in 1998, also suggests that chicken soup

has more than just a placebo effect. They looked at how chicken soup affected airflow and mucus in the noses of 15 volunteers who drank cold water, hot water, or chicken soup. In general, the warm fluids helped increase the movement of nasal mucus, but chicken soup did a better job than the hot water. Chicken soup also improves the function of protective cilia, the tiny hair-like projections in the nose that prevent contagions from entering the body, according to a 1998 *Coping with Allergies and Asthma* report.

Using Up the Leftovers

Hearty chicken and turkey soups are a favorite way to stretch leftovers (the summer reruns of the food world) to feed a crowd, and some of the recipes in this chapter are written to use cooked chicken or turkey. If you don't have any leftovers, you can buy half of a rotisserie chicken at the supermarket.

But a bigger problem arises if a recipe calls for cooking the chicken and you want to use one you've already cooked. If it's a small amount of chicken—like a pound of boneless breast or thigh meat—feel free to use what you have on hand, but add it at the end of the cooking time rather than at the beginning.

If a recipe calls for a lot of chicken, however, like the Chicken Soup with Matzo Balls (page 000), it's better to save that recipe for another time and choose one of the other temptations.



Chicken Soup with Matzo Balls

ADAPTED FROM ZINGERMAN'S DELI, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

No soup cookbook would be complete without a great recipe for “Jewish penicillin” and here it is, from a legendary deli near the campus of the University of Michigan. What makes this soup so wonderful is the richness of the broth; it begins with chicken stock and then chicken and vegetables are cooked in the stock. The secret to the fluffy lightness of the dumplings is baking soda. There is no substitute for matzo meal, but it's available with the kosher foods in the ethnic aisle of almost all supermarkets.

Serves 6 to 8

MATZO BALLS

- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- ½ cup Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- ½ cup rendered chicken fat, melted (or substitute vegetable oil)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¾ cup matzo meal

SOUP

- 10 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 1 whole bone-in chicken breast with skin and bones or 4 bone-in chicken thighs with skin, or some combination
- 2 carrots, thickly sliced
- 2 celery ribs, thickly sliced
- 1 parsnip, thickly sliced
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the matzo balls, combine the eggs, stock, chicken fat, baking soda, salt, and pepper in a mixing bowl, and whisk well. Add the matzo meal, and whisk well again. Scrape the sides of the mixing bowl, and refrigerate the mixture for 40 minutes.

While the mixture chills, make the soup. Combine the stock, chicken, carrots, celery, parsnip, parsley, thyme, and bay leaf in a 4-quart soup pot. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 45 to 50 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink. Skim the scum that rises to the top of the pot for the first 15 minutes of the cooking time. Remove the chicken from the soup with tongs, and when cool enough to handle, discard the skin and bones, and cut the meat into bite-sized pieces. Return the meat to the soup, remove and discard the bay leaf, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Tilt the pot slightly and spoon the fat off the top of the soup.

To cook the matzo balls, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Form the batter into balls the size of large walnuts using two spoons dipped in cold water or your wet fingers. Drop the balls into the boiling water, cover the pot, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the balls for 30 to 40 minutes, or until cooked through. Do not uncover the pot at all while the matzo balls are cooking.

Remove the matzo balls from the pot with a slotted spoon, and add them to the soup. To serve, divide the soup into bowls, and top with matzo balls. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup and the matzo balls can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Store the matzo balls in the soup, and reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

Variations:

- Add 3 tablespoons chopped fresh dill to the matzo ball batter.
- Add ½ cup chopped scallions (white parts and 3 inches of green tops) to the matzo ball batter.

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Rendered chicken fat, called *schmaltz* in Yiddish, was an essential ingredient for kosher cooks a century ago, because margarine hadn't been invented and the rules of kosher cooking dictate that meats and dairy—in this case butter—cannot be mixed. Chicken fat is easy enough to keep on hand. Instead of discarding the layer of fat from the top of your chicken stock, spoon it off and save it.

Herbed Chicken Soup with Dumplings

ADAPTED FROM THE SOUPBOX, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

While Jewish delis might boast about their matzo balls, there are a lot of restaurants in the Midwest and South that have light, fluffy steamed dumplings as their chicken soup's claim to fame. Once you've tried this soup, which is a great way to use up leftover chicken (or turkey after Thanksgiving), you'll see why.

Serves 6 to 8

SOUP

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion, diced

1 large carrot, diced

3 celery ribs, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary

3 cups diced cooked chicken

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

DUMPLINGS

1½ cups all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small bits

½ cup whole milk

1 large egg, lightly beaten

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, and celery, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and cook for 2 minutes. Add the chicken stock, thyme, and rosemary and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes.

While the soup simmers, make the dumplings. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a mixing bowl. Cut in the butter using a pastry blender, two knives, or your fingertips until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add the milk and egg, and stir to blend. Knead the dough gently on a lightly floured counter.

Stir the chicken into the soup and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Form the dumpling dough into 12 to 16 portions, and place the dumplings on top of the soup. Cover the pot tightly, and cook the dumplings over medium-low heat for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the dumplings are puffed and cooked through. Do not uncover the pot while the dumplings are steaming.

To serve, arrange the dumplings in bowls and ladle the soup around them. Sprinkle each serving with parsley, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Do not make the dumpling dough until just prior to serving.

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The formulation of dumpling dough is almost identical to the biscuit dough used to top a fruit cobbler. Both use baking powder as the leavening agent, but the difference is that dumplings are steamed while cobbles are baked. To confuse matters more, if dumplings are steamed on top of fruit, the resulting dessert is termed a "slump."



Chicken and Giant Noodle Soup

ADAPTED FROM THE GAGE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The Gage, which opened in 2007, is housed in a historic building consisting of three facades designed by master Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. After twenty years in the restaurant business in their native Ireland, the Lawless family moved to Chicago in 1997 and opened a string of casual yet innovative restaurants; the Gage is their most recent venture. This meal-in-a-bowl chicken soup is flavored with myriad fresh herbs. Serve it with Popovers (page 000).

Serves 8 to 10

- ¼ cup rendered chicken fat (or substitute bacon grease or olive oil)
- 4 celery ribs, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh marjoram
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons snipped fresh chives
- 1 (3½-to 4-pound) chicken or 2½ pounds chicken pieces with bones and skin (some combination of breasts and thighs)
- 4 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon smoked Spanish paprika
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ½ pound wide egg noodles

Heat the chicken fat in a 6-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the celery, carrots, onions, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onions are translucent. Stir in the thyme, marjoram, basil, parsley, and chives. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove half the contents of the pot, and set aside.

Add the chicken, stock, peppercorns, turmeric, and paprika to the pot, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 1 hour, or until the chicken is tender. Skim the scum that rises to the top of the pot for the first 15 minutes of the cooking time. Remove the chicken from the pot with tongs, and set aside. Strain the stock, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible from the solids. Return the stock to the pot.

Bring the stock back to a boil, and reduce by one-third. Add the remaining vegetable mixture, and cook for an additional 15 to 20 minutes, or until the vegetable are tender and the stock has reduced by an additional one-fourth. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

While the stock reduces, cook the egg noodles according to package instructions until al dente. When the chicken is cool enough to handle, remove it from the bones, and discard the bones and skin. Cut the chicken meat into bite-sized pieces. To serve, divide the noodles and chicken meat into bowls, and ladle the soup over them.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Refrigerate the noodles separately from the soup if cooked in advance.

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The method of dividing the vegetables ensures that the stock is infused with as much flavor as possible, yet the vegetables served as part of the dish have character and texture. While it may seem wasteful, once vegetables are boiled for a long time you gain nutrition from the stock they've infused, but you re-

Italian Chicken Soup with Barley, Beans, and Swiss Chard

Barley is an ancient grain, and it creates a thick and robust chicken soup, flavored with many vegetables and herbs as well as delicate cannellini beans. Serve it with a loaf of crusty Garlic and Cheese Bread (page 000) and a tossed salad.

Serves 4 to 6

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into ¾-inch cubes
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 celery ribs, sliced
- 2 medium carrots, sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, diced
- ¾ cup pearl barley, rinsed well
- 5 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 leaves Swiss chard, stemmed and thinly sliced
- ⅔ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, and cook for 2 minutes, or until the chicken is opaque. Add the onion, garlic, celery, carrots, and red bell pepper, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Add the barley, stock, beans, tomatoes, tomato sauce, parsley, oregano, basil, and bay leaf. Stir well. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, partially covered, for 25 minutes. Stir in the Swiss chard and simmer the soup for an additional 10 to 15 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through and no longer pink and the vegetables are tender.

Stir the Parmesan cheese into the soup, and cook for 5 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaf, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and ladle into bowls.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, covered, until hot, stirring occasionally.

Variation

Substitute 1 (10-ounce) package frozen leaf spinach, thawed and pressed in a colander to extract as much liquid as possible, for the Swiss chard. Add it along with the Parmesan cheese at the end of the cooking time.

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One of the improvements made in the past decade to processed food is the availability of no-salt-added tomato products; however, the same cannot be said for canned beans, all of which are relatively high in sodium. If you're watching sodium in your diet, cook ⅔ cup dried beans and then make this recipe.

Tortilla Soup

ADAPTED FROM FEARING'S RESTAURANT, DALLAS, TEXAS

While some chefs call it tortilla soup because they add slivers of fried corn tortillas as a garnish, famed Southwestern chef Dean Fearing purées them right into the soup, too. While born in Kentucky, Fearing has been one of the leaders of New Southwestern Cuisine for more than thirty years. He served as executive chef at the famed Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas for twenty years before starting his namesake restaurant at the nearby Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Serves 6 to 8

SOUP

- 7 dried ancho chiles
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 (6-inch) corn tortillas, chopped
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups puréed fresh onion
- 6 cups puréed fresh tomatoes
- 3 jalapeño or serrano chiles, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh epazote (or substitute 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro)
- 1½ teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 large bay leaf
- 9 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- Salt and cayenne to taste
- Freshly squeezed lemon juice to taste

GARNISHES

- Vegetable oil for frying
- 6 (6-inch) corn tortillas, cut into thin strips
- ½ pound smoked chicken, diced
- 1 large avocado, peeled, seeded, and cut into small cubes
- ¾ cup shredded cheddar
- 6 tablespoons chopped green cabbage
- 3 tablespoons chopped radish
- 2 jalapeño or serrano chiles, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped



Thai Chicken Soup with Rice Noodles

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Cover a baking sheet with heavy-duty aluminum foil, and roast the ancho chiles for 2 to 3 minutes, or until lightly toasted. When cool enough to handle, discard the stems, break the chiles apart, and discard the seeds. Set aside.

Heat the olive oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the tortillas and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the tortillas are crisp and the garlic is golden brown. Add the onion purée and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes, or until reduced by half. Add the tomato purée, roasted chiles, fresh chiles, cumin, epazote, coriander, bay leaf, and stock.

Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 40 minutes. Skim the fat from the surface, if necessary.

Allow the soup to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, you may have to work in batches. Season the soup to taste with salt, cayenne, and lemon juice.

While the soup simmers, heat 2 inches of vegetable oil in a skillet over medium-high heat to a temperature of 365°F. Fry the tortilla strips until crisp, remove them from the skillet with tongs, and drain well on paper towels.

To serve, arrange some smoked chicken, avocado, cheddar, cabbage, radish, chiles, and tortilla strips in the bottom of warmed soup bowls, and ladle the hot soup over it. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not prepare the garnishes until just prior to serving. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Raw epazote has a pungent flavor similar to that of fennel or tarragon, but even stronger, with hints of mint and citrus thrown in for good measure. It's frequently added to bean dishes in Latin America because of its carminative properties—it prevents gas from forming. It's still difficult to find fresh epazote in most supermarkets, even in the Southwest, so cilantro is a common substitute.

Fiery chile, creamy coconut milk, and aromatic ginger flavor this Asian soup that is sold in all parts of that tropical country. The coconut milk balances the more assertive flavors. Because the noodles are made from rice rather than wheat, this soup is appropriate for gluten-free diets.

Serves 6 to 8

- 4 ounces medium rice noodles
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 6 scallions, white parts and 4 inches of green tops, cut into ¾-inch lengths
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Thai or jalapeño chile, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 6 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 1 cup reduced-fat coconut milk
- 3 tablespoons fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 to 4 cups diced cooked chicken
- 3 ripe plum tomatoes, cored, seeded, and diced
- 1 cup firmly packed shredded bok choy leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¼ cup firmly packed fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the noodles, and cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain, and set aside.

While the water heats, heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the scallions, garlic, chile, ginger, and lemon zest, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the scallions are translucent.

Add the stock, coconut milk, fish sauce, and lemon juice, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken, tomatoes, and bok choy, and cook for an additional 3 minutes. Stir in the noodles, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, sprinkling each serving with cilantro.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered; refrigerate the noodles separately. Reheat it over low heat, covered, until hot, stirring occasionally.

Variations:

- Substitute medium egg noodles or a small pasta like ditalini for the rice noodles.
- Substitute 1 pound raw peeled and deveined shrimp for the cooked chicken and substitute Seafood Stock (page 000) for the chicken stock.

If you're cooking a soup that contains pasta or egg noodles and plan to refrigerate it before serving it, don't add the pasta when you cook it. The pasta can absorb more liquid and become "soggy." If you are going to refrigerate leftovers after serving the soup, it's worth the few minutes it takes to pull out the pasta with a slotted spoon or tongs and refrigerate it separately.

Yucatan Chicken and Lime Broth

ADAPTED FROM BORDER GRILL, SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

Famed chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger, the *Two Hot Tamales* on the hit Food Network television show, were first introduced to authentic Mexican food eating staff meals in a French restaurant where they worked at in the mid-1980s. The flagship Border Grill in Santa Monica opened in 1990, and there are now restaurants in downtown Los Angeles and Las Vegas, as well as a food truck that brings their honest and straightforward Mexican cooking to many locations. This citrusy soup is garnished similarly to Tortilla Soup (page 000), but it has unique flavor.

Serves 6 to 8

SOUP

2 whole small (¾- to 1-pound) bone-in chicken breasts with skin attached

3 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

Salt to taste

1½ teaspoons black peppercorns, cracked

1½ teaspoons dried oregano

10 garlic cloves, smashed but unpeeled

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion, halved and cut lengthwise into fine julienne strips

1 small green bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, cut into fine julienne strips

2 medium tomatoes, cored, seeded, cut into fine julienne strips

2 limes, juiced

2 strips grapefruit zest, each 3 x 1 inches

GARNISHES

½ cup vegetable oil

8 (6-inch) corn tortillas, cut into ¼-inch strips

3 serrano chiles, stemmed, seeded if desired, and minced (optional)

1 ripe avocado, peeled, seeded, and cut into chunks

2 limes, cut in wedges

Place the chicken breasts and stock in a 4-quart soup pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and skim off any scum that rises to the top in the first 15 minutes of the cooking. Add the salt, peppercorns, oregano, and garlic to the stock. Cook for an additional 15 to 20 minutes, or until the chicken is tender.

Remove the chicken from the pot with tongs, and transfer it to a platter. When the chicken is cool enough to handle, remove and discard the skin and bones. Shred the meat into strips and reserve.

Strain the stock through a sieve, pressing with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard the solids, and reserve the stock.

Heat the olive oil in the pot over medium-low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the green pepper and cook 5 minutes longer. Add the tomatoes, shredded chicken, reserved chicken stock, lime juice, and grapefruit zest. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 10 minutes. Remove and discard the grapefruit zest, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

While the soup simmers, prepare the garnishes. Heat the oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tortilla strips, and fry for 2 minutes, or until crisp. Remove the strips from the skillet with tongs, drain on paper towels, and set aside.

To serve, ladle the hot soup into bowls and scatter the fried tortilla strips, chile rings, if using, and avocado over each serving. Pass the lime wedges separately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not prepare the garnish until just prior to serving.

It's important when removing the zest from a citrus fruit to make sure you get none of the white pith below the thin zest layer. The zest contains all the aromatic citrus oils, but the pith is extremely bitter

New Mexico Green Chile Chicken Soup

ADAPTED FROM SLURP, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Authentic New Mexican chiles are zesty but not very hot, so you can achieve a real depth of flavor as Rebecca Chastenet does in this soup. Serve it with some warmed corn tortillas on the side.

Serves 6 to 8

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into ½-inch cubes

1 large onion, diced

5 garlic cloves, minced

4 New Mexico green Hatch chiles, seeds and ribs removed, chopped (or substitute poblano chiles or Anaheim chiles)

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained

2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 large russet potato, peeled and diced

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook for 2 minutes, or until the chicken is opaque. Remove the chicken from the pot with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the onion, garlic, and chiles, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Add the tomatoes and stock and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Add the potato, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Add the chicken and cook for an additional 10 to 15 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with cilantro.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

The firepower of fresh chiles is judged on the Scoville scale, named for American pharmacist Wilbur Scoville who developed it in 1912. The number of Scoville heat units (SHU) indicates the amount of capsaicin, the chemical compound that stimulates the nerve endings in the skin, in a pepper. The higher the Scoville rating, the hotter the pepper will be. New Mexico green chiles, poblano chiles, and Anaheim chiles are all listed in the 1,000 to 2,500 zone, while serrano chiles start around 10,000. A general rule is the smaller the chile, the hotter the chile.

Italian Turkey Soup

I've often said that ground turkey is the hamburger of the twenty-first century. This quick soup scented with fresh herbs is a wonderful way to enjoy it. Serve it with Crispy Herbed Breadsticks (page 000) and a tossed salad with vinaigrette dressing.

Serves 4 to 6

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large sweet onion, such as Vidalia or Bermuda, diced

1 carrot, diced

1 orange or yellow bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced

¾ pound ground turkey

1 quart Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained

½ cup chopped fresh parsley, divided

1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary

1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil

1 bay leaf

1 (3-inch) piece Parmesan rind (optional)

4 cups firmly packed chopped fresh kale

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

¾ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrot, bell pepper, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Crumble the turkey into the pot and cook for 2 minutes, or until it turns white.

Add the stock, tomatoes, 3 tablespoons of the parsley, rosemary, basil, bay leaf, and Parmesan rind, if using. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add the kale and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.

Remove and discard the bay leaf and the Parmesan rind, if used. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, sprinkling each serving with some of the remaining parsley. Pass the Parmesan cheese separately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

Variations

- Substitute ground beef for the ground turkey and substitute beef stock for the chicken stock.
- Add 1 cup cooked ditalini to the soup just prior to serving.

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Kale, eaten both cooked and raw, is now one of the most touted superfoods around, even more so than its cousins in the cabbage family. Cooked kale is especially hailed for its ability to lower cholesterol, support the body's system for detoxification, and provide protection from developing cancers, including those of the colon, breast, and prostate.

Greek Lemon Egg Soup (*Fotosoupa Avgolemono*)

ADAPTED FROM MOLYVOS, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

There's a satiny texture to this soup from the custard liaison and the bright flavors of dill and lemon, which enliven the broth. This recipe comes from Jim Bot-sacos, the former chef of my favorite Greek restaurant in New York, and the author of *The New Greek Cuisine*. In his original version, the *avgolemono* is a separate sauce preparation, because he uses it on many menu items, but I've simplified the recipe to make the addition just an added step.

Serves 8 to 10

STOCK

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 large onions, diced

10 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

10 black peppercorns

2 bay leaves

10 sprigs fresh parsley

10 sprigs fresh dill

1 head garlic, papery skin removed and cut in half crosswise

1 whole bone-in chicken breast with skin and bones or 4 bone-in chicken thighs with skin, or some combination

SOUP

4 large eggs, lightly beaten

½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

2 teaspoons grated lemon zest

¼ cup chopped fresh dill

2 scallions, white parts and 4 inches of green tops, thinly sliced on the diagonal

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1¼ cups shredded arugula or other baby greens

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the onions, and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes, or until the onions soften. Add the stock, peppercorns, bay leaves, parsley, dill, garlic, and chicken. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 45 to 50 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink. Skim the scum that rises to the top of the pot in the first 15 minutes of the cooking time.

Remove the chicken from the soup with tongs, and when cool enough to handle, discard the skin and bones and cut the meat into bite-sized pieces. Strain the broth through a strainer, pressing the solids with the back of a spoon to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard the solids and return the soup to the pot. Skim off any fat from the surface, add the chicken meat, and bring the stock to a boil over high heat. Turn off the heat, and take the pot off the stove.

Whisk the eggs, lemon juice, and lemon zest together in a mixing bowl until light and frothy. Slowly whisk 1 cup of the soup broth into the eggs, then return the mixture to the soup pot. Stir it in, cover the pot, and allow the soup to sit for 3 minutes to thicken. Stir in the dill and scallions. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and add additional lemon juice if needed. Serve immediately, garnishing each serving with some of the arugula.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally, but do not allow it to boil or the eggs will scramble.

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It's easier to remove the zest from citrus fruits before the juice is extracted because the skin is taut. Remove all the zest, not just the amount specified in a recipe, and store it refrigerated in a small plastic bag.

Greek Lemon Chicken Soup with Spinach

ADAPTED FROM SLURP, SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

Here is a very straightforward adaptation of this Greek classic, thickened with eggs and dotted with bright green spinach leaves. Serve it with Socca (page 000) or Focaccia (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

½ cup long-grain rice

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 medium onions, diced

2 carrots, diced

2 celery ribs, diced

2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 (8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breast, diced

1 tablespoon dried oregano

⅓ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice or to taste

2 teaspoons grated lemon zest

2 cups firmly packed baby spinach leaves

2 large eggs

1 large egg yolk

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Combine the rice and 2 cups salted water in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and cook the rice, uncovered, for 15 to 18 minutes, or until tender. Drain the rice, and set aside.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onions, carrots, and celery. Cook, stirring frequently, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the vegetables soften. Add the stock, chicken, oregano, lemon juice, and lemon zest to the pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Add the rice and spinach to the soup, and cook for 3 minutes. Take the pot off the stove.

Whisk the eggs and egg yolk together in a mixing bowl until light and frothy. Slowly whisk 1 cup of the soup broth into the eggs, then return the mixture to the soup pot. Stir it in, cover the pot, and allow the soup to sit for 3 minutes to thicken. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and add additional lemon juice if needed. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally, but do not allow it to boil or the eggs will scramble.

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If you added beaten eggs directly to simmering soup you'd have egg drop soup. The process of heating beaten eggs with some of the hot liquid it will thicken is called "tempering." Make sure the eggs are whisked very well; clumps of white or yolk will not blend evenly. Then take the pot of hot liquid off the heat, and whisk about one-fourth of it into the eggs. Now go in the other direction and, while whisking constantly, add the heated egg mixture back into the pot. Then turn the heat on very low and cook until the liquid thickens, but if you see bubbles start to form, turn off the heat.



Smoked Chicken and Arugula Soup

ADAPTED FROM HAVEN, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Chef Randy Evans, who opened Haven in 2009, was studying to be a doctor at Baylor University when he traded the knives of an operating room for those in a kitchen. Haven is the ultimate farm to table restaurant in Texas, and the smoky nuance of the chicken is a wonderful contrast to the zesty, bright green arugula in this soup. Some Limpa (page 000) goes well with this soup.

Serves 6 to 8

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 large onion, diced**
- 1 celery rib, diced**
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour**
- 2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- ½ pound arugula, chopped, divided**
- 2 cups firmly packed, diced, cooked smoked chicken**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- Additional arugula leaves, for garnish**

Heat the butter and oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium heat. Add the garlic, onion, and celery. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the flour and cook over low heat, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the stock. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently.

Add three-fourths of the arugula and bring to a boil. Simmer the soup for 30 minutes. Allow the soup to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, you may have to work in batches.

Stir in the remaining arugula and the smoked chicken. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup for 2 minutes. To serve, ladle the soup into warmed bowls and garnish each serving with additional arugula leaves.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

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If you have leftover chicken or turkey that isn't smoked, you can get some of the same flavor in the finished soup by substituting bacon grease for the butter and oil and then adding a few drops of liquid smoke to the finished soup.

Gumbo Ya-Ya

ADAPTED FROM MR. B'S BISTRO, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

Thick, rich, and spicy is what this chicken gumbo is all about. Here's what Cindy Brennan, one of the owners of Mr. B's Bistro, wrote about this soup: "We were first introduced to this rich, dark-roux gumbo from one of our early chefs, Jimmy Smith, who grew up eating it in Cajun country. Its name is said to come from women who would cook the gumbo all day long while talking, or 'ya-ya-ing.'" Serve it with Buttermilk Biscuits (page 000) or Skillet Cornbread (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter**
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour**
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, diced**
- 1 green bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, diced**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 1 celery rib, diced**
- 2½ quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- ½ pound andouille sausage, cut into ¼-inch slices**
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning**
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes**
- ½ teaspoon chili powder**
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 3 cups firmly packed diced cooked chicken**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- Hot red pepper sauce to taste**
- 2 to 3 cups cooked white rice, hot, for serving**

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Combine the butter and flour in a 4-quart soup pot. Bake the roux, stirring occasionally, for 30 to 45 minutes, or until it reaches a deep mahogany brown.

Remove the pot from the oven, and place it over medium heat. Add the red and green bell peppers and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly. Add the onion and celery, and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly. Gradually add the stock, whisking to prevent lumps from forming. Add the andouille, Creole seasoning, red pepper flakes, chili powder, thyme, garlic, and bay leaf. Bring the soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, and simmer the gumbo, uncovered, for 45 minutes, skimming off any fat and stirring occasionally.

Add the chicken and simmer 15 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt, pepper, and hot sauce, and ladle the gumbo over the rice. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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There are many national brands of Creole seasoning on the market today, packaged by such superstar chefs as Paul Prudhomme and Emeril Lagasse. But here a formulation to mix it yourself: Blend 3 tablespoons of paprika with 2 tablespoons each of kosher salt and granulated garlic and 1 tablespoon each of freshly ground black pepper, cayenne, dried oregano, dried thyme, and onion powder. Keep it in a cool dark place in an airtight container.

Thai Coconut Chicken Soup (Gai Tom Kha)

One of the wonders of authentic Thai cooking is the brightness of the flavors, and that is what appeals to me most about this soup. I developed this recipe using ingredients that can be found in any American supermarket because the traditional ingredients are still too exotic to find unless you have access to an Asian grocery. I've listed the authentic ingredients in parenthesis in case you're lucky enough to find them.

Serves 6 to 8

- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts**
- 3 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- 1 (14-ounce) can reduced-fat coconut milk**
- 1 tablespoon grated lime zest (or 5 kaffir lime leaves, cut into thin shreds)**
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger (or 3 tablespoons shredded fresh galangal)**
- 2 lemongrass stalks, only the tender inner parts, finely chopped**
- 1/3 cup freshly squeezed lime juice**
- 1/4 cup Thai or Vietnamese fish sauce**
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar**
- 2 teaspoons Thai red curry paste**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish**

Pound the chicken breasts to an even thickness of 1/2 inch. Place the chicken on a sheet of plastic wrap, and place it in the freezer for 10 to 15 minutes, or until firm. Cut the chicken into 2-inch strips, and then cut the strips against the grain into slices. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Combine the stock, coconut milk, lime zest, ginger, lemongrass, lime juice, fish sauce, brown sugar, and curry paste in a 3-quart soup pot, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 5 minutes.

Add the chicken to the soup and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, if necessary. Serve immediately, sprinkling some cilantro on each serving.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

Thais use fish sauce (*nam pla*) at the table the way we use salt and pepper in Western cuisines; they sprinkle it on just about everything. While anchovies are usually fermented with salt to form this reddish-brown liquid, it can sometimes be squid or other fish. If people have a fish allergy, they should avoid fish sauce and substitute light soy sauce with a bit of miso stirred in.

Mulligatawny

Mulligatawny, which means "pepper water" in Tamil, is a creamy Anglo-Indian dish that became popular in England during the era of the Raj. It's thickened with rice and contains some sweet apples as a foil to the spices.

Serves 6 to 8

- 4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter**
- 1 1/4 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 3/4-inch cubes**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 2 carrots, diced**
- 1 celery rib, diced**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger**
- 3 tablespoons garam masala or to taste**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 9 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- 1 cup reduced-fat coconut milk**
- 2 Golden Delicious apples, peeled, cored, and diced**
- 1/2 cup short-grain sushi rice**
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar**
- 2/3 cup heavy cream**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**
- 1/2 cup toasted chopped cashews, for garnish**
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish**

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes, or until the chicken is opaque. Remove the chicken from the pot with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the onion, carrots, celery, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the garam masala and cumin and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Return the chicken to the pot, and add the stock, coconut milk, apple, and rice. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Skim the scum that rises to the top of the pot for the first 15 minutes of the cooking time, if necessary.

Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 30 minutes, or until the chicken and vegetables are tender.

Stir in the vinegar and cream, and bring back to a simmer. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with cashews and cilantro.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

There is virtually no difference in flavor or consistency between regular coconut milk and the reduced-fat version. However there is a big difference in calories and fat. Changing the heavy cream to half-and-half truly diminishes the soup, but you can save some fat calories by using the lighter coconut milk.

Creamy Chicken and Wild Rice Soup

ADAPTED FROM THE SOUPBOX, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

There is a nutty flavor to wild rice that goes well with fresh herbs like the ones in this creamy soup. Serve it with Irish Soda Bread (page 000) and a creamy coleslaw.

Serves 6 to 8

- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, divided
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 medium carrot, diced
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup uncooked wild rice, rinsed well
- 1 quart Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock, divided
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups whole milk
- 2 cups cooked diced chicken
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh sage
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat 4 tablespoons of the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-low heat. Add the onion, carrot, and celery. Cook, covered, for 10 minutes, or until the vegetables soften. Add the garlic, and cook for 2 minutes longer.

Add the wild rice and 3 cups of the stock to the pot, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, covered, for 35 minutes.

While the soup simmers, heat the remaining butter in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the remaining stock. Bring to a boil, and simmer for 1 minute.

Add the thickened stock, milk, chicken, sage, and thyme to the pot with the vegetables and bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 20 minutes, or until the wild rice is puffed and tender. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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Wild rice, native to the Chippewa Indian lands in the lake country of Minnesota, is America's only native species and is a distant cousin of Asian rice. It is really an aquatic grass, *Zizania aquatica*, and was named "wild rice" because the visual similarity to familiar rice fields. It contains more protein than most rice, and is processed by first fermenting it to develop the characteristic nutty flavor and it is then roasted, which accounts for the brown color.

Southwest Chicken, Corn, and Sweet Potato Chowder

There's an inherent sweetness in both sweet potatoes and corn, and that is balanced by the fiery touch provided by the chiles. Chipotle chiles are smoked jalapeño chiles, and the adobo sauce in which they're packed is similar to a hot red pepper sauce. Some warm corn tortillas and a salad with avocado to complete the meal.

Serves 4 to 6

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 green bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into ¾-inch dice
- 1 quart Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 2 canned chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, finely chopped
- 2 teaspoons adobo sauce
- 1 (15-ounce) can creamed corn
- 1 cup fresh corn kernels (or substitute frozen corn, thawed)
- 2 cups half-and-half
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

Rinse the chicken and pat it dry with paper towels. Cut the chicken into ¾-inch dice.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, and cook for 2 minutes, or until the chicken is opaque. Add the green pepper, onion, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the sweet potatoes, stock, chipotle chiles, and adobo sauce to the pot, and stir well.

Bring to soup to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, covered, for 30 to 35 minutes. Add the creamed corn, corn, and half-and-half, and simmer for 5 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink and vegetables are tender. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, sprinkling each serving with cilantro.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Variation

For a less spicy soup, substitute 1 (4-ounce) can chopped mild green chiles, drained, for the chipotle chiles and adobo sauce.

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What gives creamed corn its thick texture is the natural starches from the corn cobs. While canned creamed corn is thickened with modified starch, homemade creamed corn is made by scraping the cobs to glean all the milk and starch. Then the corn is simmered with a bit of cream and butter and seasoned with salt and pepper. When it's fresh corn season, make it yourself and experience sheer bliss.

Cream of Chicken Soup with Mushrooms

ADAPTED FROM CIRO, SUN VALLEY, IDAHO

This is a soup that the whole family will enjoy. It's straightforward and delicious with just the right balance of milk and stock to cream to make it luxurious but not too rich. Serve it with some crunchy Gougères (page 000) on the side.

Serves 6 to 8

3 ounces egg noodles

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter

1 medium onion, diced

1 celery rib, diced

1 garlic clove, minced

½ pound fresh mushrooms, wiped with a damp paper towel and thinly sliced

¼ cup all-purpose flour

1 quart Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

3 cups whole milk

1 cup heavy cream

2 cups firmly packed diced cooked chicken

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cook the egg noodles according to package directions until al dente. Drain the noodles and set aside.

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the mushrooms, and cook for 5 minutes, or until the mushrooms soften and the liquid in the pot evaporates.

Reduce the heat to low. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the stock and milk. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 10 minutes.

Add the cream, chicken, and noodles. Bring back to a simmer, and then remove the pot from the heat. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

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The point of cooking the flour for a roux before adding the liquid is to coat the protein particles so the resulting sauce or soup doesn't taste pasty. To accomplish this end, the flour has to combine with fat and not water. That's why it's important to allow the moisture that will emerge from the mushrooms as they cook to evaporate before adding the flour to the pot.

Turkey Chili

ADAPTED FROM CLINTON ST. BAKING COMPANY COOKBOOK BY DEDE LAHMAN, NEIL KLEINBERG, AND MICHAEL HARLAN TURKELL, LITTLE, BROWN 2010.

Chef Neil Kleinberg's dish is a cross between a soup and a stew. It is eaten with a spoon, but it's really thick and satisfying with a complex flavor profile. This is one of the dishes that can be most successfully served in Bread Bowls (page 000).

Serves 8 to 10

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium Spanish onion, diced

2 medium carrots, diced

3 celery ribs, diced

1 medium red bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, diced

5 garlic cloves, minced

1 pound ground turkey

1½ tablespoons chili powder

1½ teaspoons dried oregano

1½ teaspoons ground cumin

½ teaspoon dried thyme

½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

2 bay leaves

2 dashes hot red pepper sauce

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 chipotle pepper in adobo sauce, drained and finely chopped

3 cups crushed tomatoes

2 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 (15-ounce) can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Shredded sharp cheddar cheese, for garnish

Guacamole, for garnish

Crushed tortilla chips, for garnish

Sour cream, for garnish

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, carrots, celery, red bell pepper, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft and slightly browned. Add the turkey, and break up lumps with a spoon. Cook for 2 minutes, or until it lightens in color. Add the chili powder, oregano, cumin, thyme, crushed red pepper flakes, bay leaves, tomato paste, and chipotle pepper. Cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Stir in the tomatoes and stock, and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the chili, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add the kidney beans, and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaves, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately, passing bowls of shredded cheddar, guacamole, crushed tortilla chips, and sour cream separately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

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Cooking dried herbs and spices before liquid is added to a recipe helps to bring out their flavors and aromas and takes away any "raw" taste. This process is especially important for mixtures like chili powder and curry powder.

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Meaty Soups

These are all stick-to-the-ribs sorts of soups that are a whole meal when served with some crispy bread and a tossed salad to add additional crunch, because the vegetables in the soups are all soft. In this chapter, you'll find recipes from a number of different cuisines, ranging from Vietnamese and Chinese to Mexican and Spanish.

Because these soups are made with meats many have rather long cooking times. But they all freeze well, so it makes sense to do a whole batch and have them around for winter "dinner insurance."

The Benefits of Browning

For red meats like beef, browning is the initial step to a delicious dish; it's an optional step for poultry and pork, and totally unnecessary for fish and seafood. What browning accomplishes is called the Maillard reaction, and it was named for an early-twentieth century chemist, Louis Camille Maillard, who discovered it. A chemical reaction that takes place on the surface of meats creating the development of flavor, it takes place when food reaches 285°F, and that can only be done in a hot pan before cooking. Otherwise, the temperature of the meat only reaches 212°F, which is the simmering temperature of the soup.

Browning seals in juices as it makes foods more visually appealing, too. Here are some tips for browning foods to be braised:

- Dry food well. Moisture causes splatters, which messes up the stove, and can burn the cook.
- Preheat the pan. You have to wait until the fat is very hot, or the food will not brown.
- Don't crowd the pan. For food to brown it needs room for the steam to escape that's created when the cold food hits the hot pan.

Preheat the broiler well if using that method. All meats *not* coated with flour can be browned under the broiler as well as in a pan. Flour needs the fat in the pan to cook it properly. But you want to preheat the broiler for at least 10 or 15 minutes to create the brown crust.



Beef and Beet Borscht

Roasting the beets intensifies their innate sweetness, and also turns this traditional Eastern European soup a bright crimson red. Serve it with a loaf of Limpa (page 000) or Pretzel Rolls (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

1 pound fresh beets

1 pound boneless chuck roast, trimmed and cut into ¾-inch dice

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 large onion, diced

1 large carrot, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

6 cups firmly packed shredded green cabbage

6 cups Beef Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained

2 tablespoons tomato paste

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1 pound redskin potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1-inch cubes

3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

¾ cup sour cream, for garnish

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The pigment that gives beets their rich, purple-crimson color—betacyanin—is also a powerful cancer-fighting agent. Beets' potential effectiveness against colon cancer, in particular, has been demonstrated in several studies. They are also high in manganese and folate.

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Cut the leaves off the beets, leaving the stems attached. Scrub the beets gently, and wrap them in a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Place the foil packet on a baking sheet, and bake the beets for 1 to 1¼ hours, or until the beets are tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. When the beets are cool enough to handle, peel them and cut them into ½-inch dice.

While the beets bake, rinse the beef and pat it dry with paper towels. Sprinkle the beef with salt and pepper.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the beef, and brown it well on all sides. Remove the beef from the pot with a slotted spoon, and set aside. Add the onion, carrot, and garlic to the pot, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the cabbage, and cook for 2 minutes, or until the cabbage wilts.

Return the beef to the pot, and add the stock, tomatoes, tomato paste, and parsley. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, covered, for 1½ hours, adding the beets to the pot when they are ready.

Add the potatoes, lemon juice, and sugar to the pot, and boil for an additional 30 minutes, or until the beef and potatoes are tender. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with sour cream.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

Barley Mushroom Soup

ADAPTED FROM ZINGERMAN'S DELI, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

We can thank the nineteenth-century immigration of Eastern European Jews for this hearty and warming winter soup, as well as for borscht and matzo ball soup. Barley grew well in the cold climate of Russia and Poland, and mushrooms could be harvested in the fall and dried for use all winter. This is truly a meal in a bowl, with nothing else needed. It is also an excellent soup to serve in Bread Bowls (page 000) or with a crusty loaf of Limpa (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

¼ cup chopped dried porcini mushrooms

2 quarts Beef Stock (page 000) or purchased stock, divided

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

¾ pound beef chuck or brisket, cut into ½-inch cubes

1 large sweet onion, such as Vidalia or Bermuda, diced

2 carrots, sliced

2 celery ribs, sliced

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 pound fresh cremini mushrooms, wiped with a damp paper towel and sliced

¼ cup all-purpose flour

1 cup whole hulled barley, rinsed well

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley, divided

2 teaspoons fresh thyme

1 bay leaf

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

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The difference between whole hulled barley and pearled barley is the same as that between brown rice and white rice. The latter has been milled to remove the outer coating, so it is not as nutritious nor does it contain as much fiber. If you are substituting pearled barley in this or any other recipe, the cooking time will be about 40 minutes, rather than the 1 to 1¼ hours listed.

Combine the dried mushrooms and ¾ cup stock in a microwave-safe container. Microwave on High (100 percent power) for 1 to 1½ minutes, or until the stock boils. Soak the mushrooms in the stock, pushing them down into the liquid with the back of a spoon, for 10 minutes. Drain the mushrooms, reserving the stock. Strain the stock through a sieve lined with a paper coffee filter or a paper towel. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the beef, and brown on all sides. Remove the beef from the pot with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the onion, carrots, celery, and garlic to the pot. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the fresh mushrooms, and cook, stirring frequently, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the mushrooms begin to soften. Stir in the flour, and cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly.

Add the beef, remaining stock, reserved mushroom stock, soaked dried mushrooms, barley, 2 tablespoons of the parsley, thyme, and bay leaf to the pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally.

Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and cook the soup for 1 to 1¼ hours, or until the barley is tender. Remove and discard the bay leaf, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, sprinkling each serving with the remaining parsley.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Ropa Vieja

ADAPTED FROM BORDER GRILL, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Ropa vieja literally translates as “old clothes,” and traditional versions of this Cuban dish are made from whatever simple stew might be left over and is then joined with leftover vegetables and some broth. This updated version from Border Grill is served with warm tortillas, fried plantains, and a fresh tomato salsa. It’s a satisfying meal, although not too heavy to enjoy during warmer months.

Serves 4 to 6

SOUP

- 2 poblano chiles
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 pound pork loin or skirt steak, cut into bite-sized strips
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 large onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 1 medium carrot, diced
- 1 quart Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 6 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ½ bunch cilantro, chopped

GARNISH

- 2 ripe plantains, for garnish
- Oil for frying
- Flour or corn tortillas, warmed, for garnish
- Fresh tomato salsa, for garnish

Cut a small slit in the cap end of the poblano chiles and red bell pepper. Roast the peppers over a gas flame or under the oven broiler. Keep turning the peppers so that their skin chars evenly. Transfer the peppers to a heavy resealable plastic bag and allow them to steam for 10 to 15 minutes. When cool enough to handle, pull off the charred skin by hand and dip the peppers in water to remove any blackened bits. Once peeled, discard the stems, seeds, and ribs. Cut the peppers into fine julienne strips, and set aside.

Season the meat to taste with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook meat until browned on all sides and just cooked through. Remove the meat from the pan with a slotted spoon, and set aside.

Add the onion to the skillet and cook, stirring frequently, for 10 minutes, or until golden. Add the garlic and cumin and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir in the celery, carrot, poblano chiles, and bell pepper, and cook for 2 minutes. Scrape the mixture into a 4-quart soup pot, and add the stock and beans. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to low, and simmer the mixture for 10 minutes. Add the reserved meat to the pot along with any accumulated juices. Stir in the vinegar and cilantro and cook just to heat through. Adjust the seasoning, if necessary.

While the soup simmers, prepare the plantains. Cut the plantains into 1-inch pieces. Heat 2 inches of oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat to a temperature of 365°F. Fry the plantains for 5 minutes, or until they begin to brown. Remove the plantains from the pan with a slotted spoon and drain well on paper towels. Flatten the plantains with the bottom of a metal can or small saucepan to half their height. Heat the oil to 385°F and fry the plantains again for 3 minutes, or until browned. Drain again, and keep warm. To serve, ladle the hot soup into bowls, and pass the tortillas, plantains, and salsa separately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not prepare the garnish until just prior to serving.

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This dish is perfect for using up leftover pot roast, beef brisket, or roasted pork butt. Just shred cooked meat with a fork and add it to the soup at same time as the vinegar and cilantro.

Mexican Albondigas Soup with Chorizo Meatballs

Filled with healthful vegetables and legumes, this soup is enriched by the flavorful meatballs made of earthy and spicy chorizo sausage. Serve it with corn tortillas and a tomato salad.

Serves 6 to 8

Soup

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 large onion, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 jalapeño or serrano chile, seeds and ribs removed, finely chopped

2 carrots, sliced

2 celery ribs, sliced

8 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained

2 small zucchini, diced

1 (15-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

MEATBALLS

1/4 cup olive oil

3 garlic cloves, peeled

1 cup firmly packed fresh cilantro leaves

1 pound ground pork

1/2 pound chorizo, removed from casings if necessary

1 large egg, lightly beaten

1/2 cup plain breadcrumbs

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Nonstick cooking spray

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, and chile, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the carrots, celery, stock, and tomatoes, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, covered, for 15 minutes. Add the zucchini and garbanzo beans, and simmer for an additional 10 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Keep the soup hot.

While the soup simmers, make the meatballs. Preheat the oven to 450°F, line a rimmed baking sheet with heavy-duty aluminum foil, and spray the foil with nonstick cooking spray.

Combine the oil, garlic, and cilantro in a blender or food processor fitted with a steel blade, and purée until smooth. Combine the purée, pork, chorizo, egg, and breadcrumbs in a mixing bowl, and mix well. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Form the mixture into 1-inch meatballs, and arrange the meatballs on the prepared pan. Spray the tops of the meatballs with nonstick cooking spray.

Bake the meatballs for 8 to 10 minutes, or until cooked through. Add the meatballs to the soup, and simmer for 5 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be made up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, covered.

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Chorizo, pronounced *chore-EAT-zoh*, is a highly-seasoned pork sausage flavored with garlic, chili powder, and other spices. It's used in both Mexican and Spanish cooking; if you can't find it, look for its cousin from the Iberian peninsula, *linguiça*, pronounced *ling-GWE-sah*.



Scotch Broth

While there are many wonderful soups that are based on beef, there are very few that use lamb, a meat I adore for its innate rich flavor, and traditional Scotch broth is one of them. Along with Scotch eggs and Dundee cake, this soup is one of the best-known dishes of Scottish cuisine. Vegetables and barley in a richly flavored broth join the lamb. My version contains some herbs not usually found in historic versions.

Serves 6 to 8

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1¼ pounds boneless lamb shoulder, cut into ¾-inch cubes

1 large onion, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced

5 cups Beef Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 quart Vegetable Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves

2 carrots, diced

2 parsnips, diced

½ rutabaga, diced

⅔ cup pearl barley, rinsed well

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the lamb shoulder and cook, stirring frequently, until the lamb is browned on all sides. Add the onion and garlic, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Add the beef stock, vegetable stock, parsley, bay leaves, and thyme to the pot, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low. Skim the scum that rises to the top of the pot in the first 15 minutes of the cooking time. Cook the soup, partially covered, for 1 hour. Add the carrots, parsnips, rutabaga, and barley. Bring the soup back to a boil and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the lamb and vegetables are tender. Remove and discard the bay leaves, and season the soup to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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In the eighteenth century, James Boswell recounted Dr. Samuel Johnson's first encounter with Scotch broth in his famed biography, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. After Johnson had eaten a few bowls of the soup, Boswell asked if he'd never had it before. "No, sir," Johnson replied, "but I don't care how soon I eat it again." But the tradition remains in Scotland today to eat Scotch broth for good luck on New Year's Day.

Vietnamese Rice Chowder with Pork (Chao)

ADAPTED FROM PHO HORN'S, PAWTUCKET, RHODE ISLAND

Vietnamese cuisine is known for its soups, most especially *pho*. But I discovered this comforting rice chowder, similar to a congee, at a restaurant in my neighborhood. It's subtle and the nuances of flavor from the fried shallots and scallions add complexity to the dish.

Serves 6 to 8

2 thick or 3 thin scallions

2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

3 tablespoons very fine julienne of fresh ginger

1 cup short-grain (sushi) rice

¼ pound ground pork

1 tablespoon Vietnamese fish sauce (nuoc cham)

½ teaspoon granulated sugar

4 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided

1 shallot, minced

1 to 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste

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It's always important to use the rice specified in a recipe because each of the thousands of species, all of which came from one parent in India many millennia ago, are different. Some rices, like basmati and jasmine, are known for their fragrance, while other species, like Arborio and sushi rice, have a high starch content. For this soup, you want the rice to fall apart and thicken the broth, and sushi rice is perfect for that task.

Thinly slice the white parts of the scallions. Slice 4 inches of the green tops into ¼-inch slices. Set aside the white rings and green tops separately.

Combine the stock, white scallion rings, and ginger in a saucepan, and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring occasionally.

While the stock heats, rinse the rice in a sieve until the water coming from the rice is clear. Add the rice to the boiling stock, and reduce the heat to very low. Simmer the soup, covered, stirring occasionally, for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the rice is falling apart.

While the soup simmers, combine the pork, fish sauce, and sugar in a small bowl, and mix well. Heat 2 teaspoons of the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the shallot, stirring occasionally, for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the shallot is lightly browned. Scrape the shallot out of the skillet, and set aside.

Add the remaining oil to the skillet. Crumble the pork into the skillet, and stir-fry until no pink remains. Remove the pork from the skillet with a slotted spoon, and set aside.

Add the pork and fried shallot to the soup, and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the pork is cooked through. Add the green scallion tops and cilantro, and simmer 1 minute. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Variation

Substitute ground turkey for the pork.

Hot and Sour Soup

ADAPTED FROM SUSANNA FOO'S GOURMET KITCHEN, RADNOR, PENNSYLVANIA

Back in the late 1960s, I was introduced to hot and sour soup at a small hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurant in Harlem. It was my first venture into the wonders of spicy Chinese food and remains one of my favorites. This is truly warming on a chilly day.

Serves 6 to 8

⅓ pound lean boneless pork

1 tablespoon brandy

¼ cup soy sauce, divided

¼ cup cornstarch, divided

2 quarts Chinese Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock, divided

12 dried tree ear mushrooms

12 dried lily bud mushrooms

3 tablespoons white wine vinegar or to taste

1½ teaspoons freshly ground white pepper or to taste

¼ teaspoon cayenne or to taste

1 ounce fresh shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and cut into ¼-inch slivers

6 ounces firm tofu, drained and cut into ½-inch dice

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

2 teaspoons Asian sesame oil

Salt to taste

½ cup thinly sliced scallion greens for garnish

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro for garnish

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Unlike dried shiitake mushrooms, which are the most common ones used in Chinese cooking, tree ear mushrooms, sometimes called cloud ear, expand greatly when rehydrated. They've been used in Chinese cooking since the sixth century. After rehydrating them, examine them carefully and discard any stems you see. Then slice them into shreds.

Place the pork on a sheet of plastic wrap in the freezer for 15 minutes or until firm. Slice the pork into ½-inch-thick slices, and then stack the slices and cut them into thin shreds. Combine the pork, brandy, 1 tablespoon cornstarch, and 1 tablespoon of the soy sauce in a bowl, and mix well.

Bring 2 cups of the stock to a boil in a small saucepan or in the microwave oven. Add the tree ear mushrooms and lily bud mushrooms. Soak the mushrooms in the boiling stock, pushing them down into the liquid with the back of a spoon, for 10 minutes. Drain the mushrooms, reserving the stock. Slice the tree ear mushrooms into shreds. Strain the stock through a sieve lined with a paper coffee filter or paper towel. Set aside.

Place the mushroom stock, remaining stock, remaining soy sauce, vinegar, pepper, and cayenne in a 4-quart soup pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Mix the remaining cornstarch with ¼ cup cold water, and stir well to dissolve the cornstarch. Add the mixture to the boiling soup along with the pork. Simmer the soup, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Add the rehydrated mushrooms, fresh mushrooms, and tofu, and simmer for another 10 minutes.

Slowly add the eggs to the simmering soup, stirring gently in one direction. When the eggs are added, stir in the sesame oil, and season the soup to taste with salt and additional pepper. To serve, ladle the soup into bowls, sprinkling each serving with scallion greens and cilantro.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Do not prepare the garnish until just prior to serving.

Variation

Substitute chicken or beef for the pork.

Italian Wedding Soup

Tasty greens, swirls of egg, lots of heady Parmesan, and flavorful meatballs are the hallmarks of this soup. Wedding soup is actually Italian-American rather than tied to any Italian region. The name is a mistranslation of *minestra maritata* which has nothing to do with nuptials, but is a reference to the fact that green vegetables and meats go well together. While traditionally the meatballs are dropped into the simmering soup to cook, I find it more visually appealing to brown them first in the oven.

Serves 6 to 8

3 large eggs, divided

½ cup seasoned Italian breadcrumbs

¼ cup whole milk

1 small onion, grated

2 garlic cloves, minced

¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided

¾ pound ground veal

½ pound ground pork

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 (1-pound) head of escarole, cored, and coarsely chopped

Nonstick cooking spray

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If you're not sure how fresh your eggs are, place them in a mixing bowl filled with cold water. As eggs age, they develop air pockets, so older eggs float while fresher ones sink. If the eggs are floating high on the surface of the water, it's best to get a fresh dozen.

Preheat the oven to 425°F, line a baking sheet with heavy-duty aluminum foil, and grease the foil with nonstick cooking spray.

Combine 1 egg with the breadcrumbs, milk, onion, garlic, parsley, and ½ cup Parmesan, and mix well. Add the veal and pork, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and mix well. Form the mixture into 1-inch meatballs, and arrange them on the prepared baking sheet. Bake the meatballs for 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly browned.

Combine the chicken stock and escarole in a 4-quart soup pot, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Add the meatballs, and simmer for an additional 5 minutes, or until the escarole is tender.

Whisk the remaining 2 eggs with 2 tablespoons of the remaining cheese. Stir the soup and gradually add the egg mixture to form thin strands. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, passing the remaining cheese separately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

Variations

- Substitute ground turkey for the ground veal and pork.
- Add ½ to ¾ cup ditalini or orzo to the soup along with the meatballs, and cook until the pasta is al dente.



Sweet Potato and Ham Chowder

Here's another soup coming straight out of the South, and Buttermilk Biscuits (page 000) are the best to serve with it. Some herbs balance the innate sweetness of the potato, and the addition of hearty ham elevates it to meal-in-a-bowl status. Some crunchy cole slaw goes nicely with it, too.

Serves 6

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, divided
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 quart Ham Stock (page 000), Chicken Stock (page 000), or purchased stock
- 3 cups light cream
- 3 medium sweet potatoes (about 6 ounces each), peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ to 2 cups diced cooked ham
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ½ cup sour cream or crème fraîche, for garnish
- 3 tablespoons snipped fresh chives, for garnish

Heat 2 tablespoons of the butter and the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, carrot, and garlic, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Reduce the heat to low, add the remaining butter, and stir in the flour. Cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the stock and cream. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently.

Add the sweet potato cubes, parsley, thyme, rosemary, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, partially covered and stirring it occasionally, for 15 minutes, or until the sweet potatoes are very tender. Add the ham and cook for 3 minutes.

Remove and discard the bay leaf, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with sour cream and chives.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

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One of the wonderful things about ham stock is the smoky nuance it adds to soups. Another way to achieve that same undertaste is by substituting bacon grease for the butter and vegetable oil specified in the recipe.

Caldo Gallego

ADAPTED FROM AMADA, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Caldo gallego translates literally as “soup from Galicia,” which is the birthplace of this popular Spanish soup that blends beans and greens with different types of sausage. Jose Garces, who opened the restaurant in 2005 and was awarded the James Beard Award for Outstanding Chef in the Mid-Atlantic Region in 2009, developed this version.

Serves 6 to 8

- 2 cups small white navy beans**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- ½ pound bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 1 large onion, diced**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 teaspoon Spanish paprika**
- ½ pound chorizo de Bilbao, diced**
- 1 (½-pound) smoked pork hock, skin scored**
- 9 cups Ham Stock (page 000), Chicken Stock (page 000), or purchased stock**
- 2 Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and diced**
- 2 cups firmly packed shredded escarole**
- 3 cups firmly packed shredded turnip greens**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**

.....
Chorizo de Bilbao is a semi-cured sausage and one of Spain's most popular cooking chorizos. It originated in the Basque provinces around Pamplona. The pungent, slightly firm meat is seasoned with the usual Spanish trinity of garlic, pimento, and pepper, but it's also laced with cumin and oregano. It's fairly easy to find, especially in Hispanic markets.

Rinse the beans in a colander and place them in a mixing bowl covered with cold salted water. Allow beans to soak overnight. Alternatively, place beans into a saucepan of salted water and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil 1 minute. Turn off the heat, cover the pan, and soak the beans for 1 hour. With either soaking method, drain the beans, discard the soaking water, and cook or refrigerate the beans immediately.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the bacon and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until crisp. Remove the bacon from the pot with a slotted spoon, and drain on paper towels. Set aside.

Add the onion and garlic, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Stir in the paprika and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add the beans, chorizo, pork hock, and stock, and bring to a boil over high heat, stirring occasionally.

Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, partially covered, for 1¼ hours. Remove the pork hock, and when cool enough to handle, shred the meat and discard the skin and bones. Set aside.

Add the potatoes, escarole, and turnip greens to the soup, and cook for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the beans are very soft. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with bacon and some of the shredded pork meat.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

Cheddar Soup with Bacon

ADAPTED FROM THE SOUPBOX, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Here's a soup that takes the chill out of the most frosty day in the Windy City. The stock and beer base is joined with a béchamel sauce into which lots of sharp cheddar is added. This thick and rich soup is a great one to serve in Bread Bowls (page 000).

Serves 6 to 8

- ¾ pound bacon, diced**
- 1 medium onion, chopped**
- 1 medium carrot, chopped**
- 2 celery ribs, chopped**
- 2 garlic cloves, minced**
- 3 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock**
- 1 (12-ounce) can or bottle lager beer**
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter**
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour**
- 3 cups whole milk**
- 5 cups firmly packed grated sharp cheddar cheese**
- 1 tablespoon whole grain mustard**
- 2 teaspoons hot red pepper sauce or to taste**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**

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It can sometimes be difficult to separate slices of bacon when they're chilled because they're right out of the refrigerator. Throw the whole amount into your pan and within one minute the slices will warm up and you can separate them from each other with tongs.

Cook the bacon in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat for 5 to 7 minutes, or until crisp. Remove the bacon from the pot with a slotted spoon, and drain on paper towels. Set aside.

Discard all but 3 tablespoons of bacon grease from the pot. Add the onion, carrot, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the stock and beer and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 15 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.

While the soup simmers, heat the butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute, or until the mixture turns slightly beige, is bubbly, and appears to have grown in volume. Increase the heat to medium, and slowly whisk in the milk. Bring to a boil, whisking frequently. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the sauce for 1 minute.

Add the sauce to the soup mixture, and bring back to a simmer. Add the cheese to the soup by ½-cup measures, stirring until the cheese melts before making another addition. Return half of the bacon to the pot, and stir in the mustard and hot red pepper sauce. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with some of the remaining bacon.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Variation

Substitute Gruyère or Swiss cheese for the cheddar.

Kale Soup with Linguica (Caldo Verde)

There is a strong Portuguese influence in the cooking of southern New England, dating back to the early-nineteenth-century whaling era. I encountered this soup first while living on Nantucket, and there are versions of it on the menus of every Portuguese restaurant in Providence, too. The combination of spicy sausage with hearty greens is both delicious and visually pleasing. Serve it with Crispy Herbed Breadsticks (page 000).

Makes 4 to 6 servings

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ pound linguica, chouriço, or smoked kielbasa, diced

1 large onion, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced

1½ pounds boiling potatoes, peeled and diced

5 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 pound fresh kale

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

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Kale is a member of the cabbage family, now seen as superfoods because of their high levels of phytonutrients, especially a group called the glucosinolates. These sulfur-containing compounds have a proven track record of lowering the risk of certain cancers, including colorectal cancer, breast cancer, and prostate cancer. In addition, the glucosinolates have antiviral and antibacterial properties, as well as anti-inflammatory effects.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 to 5 minutes, or until browned. Remove the sausage from the pot with a slotted spoon, and set aside. Discard all but 2 tablespoons of grease from the pot.

Add the onion and garlic, and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Add the potatoes and stock to the pot, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Simmer the soup, partially covered, for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender.

While the soup simmers, prepare the kale. Rinse the kale and discard the stems and center of the ribs. Cut the leaves crosswise into thin slices.

Allow the soup to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, you may have to work in batches.

Bring the soup to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Return the sausage to the pot and stir in the kale. Reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup, covered, for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the kale is cooked and tender. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add stock or water if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Variation

Substitute escarole or Swiss chard for the kale.

Pepperoni Soup

ADAPTED FROM SECOND BAR + KITCHEN, AUSTIN, TEXAS

This recipe comes from the kitchen of executive chef David Bull's grandmother, and it is like a liquid version of the flavors you get when you take a bite of gooey pepperoni pizza. Serve it with a raw fennel salad or a tossed salad with balsamic vinaigrette dressing.

Serves 6 to 8

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 tablespoons olive oil

½ pound pepperoni, cut into small dice

2 large onions, diced

3 celery ribs, diced

6 garlic cloves, minced

⅓ teaspoon celery seeds

1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes or to taste

3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano

1 cup tomato purée

⅓ cup Sauternes or other late-harvest sweet wine

2½ cups tomato juice

1½ cups tomato sauce

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 to 3 cups grated whole-milk mozzarella cheese, for garnish

2 cups Croutons (page 000), for garnish

Heat the butter and oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the pepperoni and cook, stirring frequently, for 8 minutes, or until the pepperoni is browned. Add the onions, celery, garlic, celery seeds, and crushed red pepper flakes. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onions are translucent. Add the basil, parsley, and oregano. Cover the pot, reduce the heat to low, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes, or until the vegetables soften.

Add the tomato purée, and cook for 2 minutes over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Add the Sauternes and cook for 1 minute. Add the tomato juice, tomato sauce, and 1½ cups water to the pot. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately, garnishing each serving with grated mozzarella and croutons.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

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Cooking vegetables covered is referred to by chefs as "sweating" them. It's a good term to know because you frequently see it in chefs' recipes. The "sweating" can be done at the onset of cooking, which is the way to caramelize onions, or it can occur later in the process to soften vegetables, as is the case in this recipe. What's important to remember is to have the heat very low and to stir the vegetables from time to time.

German Sausage and Sauerkraut Soup

I entered journalism as a reporter at the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, and the city had a rich German heritage from waves of nineteenth-century immigration. A restaurant named Grammer's in a neighborhood dubbed Over-the-Rhine opened in 1872 and was still going strong a century later. I always ordered the sauerkraut soup there, and when I moved from the city I worked on replicating it. This is hearty, and like a more liquid version of *choucroute garnie*.

Serves 6 to 8

1 (1-pound) package sauerkraut

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 pound smoked sausage, such as fresh kielbasa, removed from the casing and diced

1 large onion, diced

1 large carrot, sliced

1 celery rib, sliced

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 cup dry white wine

3 tablespoons gin

7 cups Ham Stock (page 000), Chicken Stock (page 000), or purchased stock

2 russet potatoes, peeled and diced

1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves

1 teaspoon caraway seeds

1 bay leaf

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place the sauerkraut in a colander and run cold water over it for 3 minutes. Wring it out in your hands, and set aside.

Heat the oil in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the sausage and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the sausage is browned. Add the onion, carrot, celery, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Add the wine and gin, and cook until the liquid is almost totally evaporated. Add the sauerkraut, stock, potatoes, thyme, caraway seeds, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, stirring occasionally, for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the potatoes and sauerkraut are tender.

Remove and discard the bay leaf, season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally.

.....
It's really important to rinse sauerkraut very well when cooking with it rather than putting it on a hot dog. The brine that ferments shreds of cabbage into sauerkraut is very salty and pungent, and it would take over the soup if not handled carefully.



Garlic Soup with Pancetta

ADAPTED FROM PIPERADE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Chef Gerald Hirigoyen says this soup is a famous breakfast in his native Basque country for shepherds to warm themselves before going out to tend their flocks. The garlic becomes sweet and nutty when poached this way, and while I'm not sure I'd really eat this for breakfast, I adore it as a casual supper with a salad.

Serves 4 to 6

10 ounces pancetta

¼ cup rendered duck fat or olive oil

1 large onion, diced

20 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

2 quarts Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

1 baguette, preferably stale

3 large eggs, beaten

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cut the pancetta into ¾-inch slices and then cut the slices into ¾-inch cubes.

Heat the duck fat in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until it crisps and renders its fat. Remove the pancetta from the pot with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Add the onion and garlic to the pot and cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent. Return the pancetta to the pot and add the stock. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to low and simmer the soup, partially covered, for 20 minutes.

While the soup simmers, preheat the oven to 400°F. Slice the baguette into ½-inch-thick slices and arrange them on a baking sheet. Toast the bread for 15 to 18 minutes, or until browned and crisp. Remove the bread from the oven and set aside.

Slowly pour the eggs into the soup in a thin stream, whisking constantly. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, place 2 baguette slices on the bottom of each soup bowl and ladle the soup over the bread. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. The toast can also be prepared up to 2 days in advance and kept at room temperature in an airtight container.

Pancetta, like American bacon, is made from pork belly, but the Italian meat is cured with salt and other spices rather than smoked and it's sold in a roll rather than sliced. It adds a richness and great flavor to a variety of dishes. Like bacon, it should be cooked until crispy.

Italian Sausage and Chestnut Soup

ADAPTED FROM FELIDIA, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

I first had this soup at Lidia Bastianich's fabulous Felidia restaurant in New York, and the creamy, earthy chestnuts laced with a bit of heady Marsala are a wonderful base for the bits of sausage. Serve it with a tossed salad and Focaccia (page 000).

Serves 4 to 6

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 small onion, chopped

1 celery rib, chopped

1 small carrot, chopped

1 garlic clove, minced

6 cups Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary

1 bay leaf

1 (15-ounce) jar cooked chestnuts, chopped

⅓ cup dry Marsala

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ pound sweet Italian sausage

½ cup heavy cream

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Heat the butter in a 4-quart soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, carrot, and garlic. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes, or until the onion is translucent.

Add the stock, parsley, rosemary, bay leaf, chestnuts, and Marsala to the pot, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Cover the pot, reduce the heat to low, and simmer the soup for 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft.

While the soup simmers, heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Crumble the sausage into the skillet and cook, breaking up lumps with a fork, for 3 to 5 minutes, or until browned. Set aside.

Remove and discard bay leaf from the soup. Allow to cool for 10 minutes. Purée the soup with an immersion blender, or in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. If using a food processor, you may have to work in batches.

Add the sausage and cream to the soup, and bring to a boil over medium heat. Simmer the soup for 10 minutes, uncovered, over low heat. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The soup can be prepared up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered. Reheat it over low heat, stirring occasionally. Add milk or cream if the soup needs thinning after reheating.

Variation

Substitute golden sherry for Marsala.

Marsala is a fortified wine, similar to Madeira and sherry, made in Sicily from a variety of grapes grown around the town of Marsala. It was very popular in the English market in the early nineteenth century after Lord Nelson made it his choice as an onboard drink.



9

Breads, Quick Breads, and Rolls

Breads are the immediate go-to food to accompany a bowl of soup, and the emphasis in this chapter is on breads with a crunchy exterior to serve as a foil against the inherent softness of the soup. Just as there are soups from around the world in the previous chapters of this book, the breads are also international in scope.

Many of the soup recipes refer to these breads because they complement each other so well. You'll find long, crisp Parmesan Breadsticks (grissini; page 000) and flavorful Focaccia (page 000) to accompany Italian and other Mediterranean recipes. And there's nothing like a wedge of Skillet Cornbread (page 000) to perch on the edge of a bowl of chowder or gumbo.

Yeast Breads

If you number yourself in the group of cooks who are afraid of working with yeast, so they do not consider making yeast-risen breads, now is the time to take the plunge. The whole process could not be easier, and here's a primer on how to work with this live leavening agent.

Yeast is a single-celled fungus, of which hundreds of species have been identified. Those of the genera *Saccharomyces* and *Candida* are the most useful for breads and beer. The single cells are very small: hundreds of millions of them would fit into a teaspoon. While green plants feed via photosynthesis, yeast feeds on carbohydrates and excretes alcohol while producing carbon dioxide. That's why yeast is as

good a friend of the brewer as it is of the baker. Given plenty of air and some food, yeast grows fast and produces a lot of carbon dioxide. It is the pressure of this gas that makes the bread rise.

There are two types of yeast on the market. Active dry yeast is a dormant form of yeast and needs to be rehydrated (or "proofed") prior to being used in a recipe. This means that the yeast needs to be dissolved in warm water, as explained below. Instant yeast is different than active dry yeast in that it does not need to be proofed prior to using in a recipe. The granules of instant yeast are smaller than those of active dry yeast and you can add the yeast directly in with all the other dough ingredients without letting it activate in warm water first.

It's best to use the type of yeast specified in a recipe, but if you want to save the ten minutes of proofing time, you can substitute instant yeast for dry active yeast.

All bread depends on the interaction of some sort of flour, liquid, and leavening agent. When the proteins in wheat flour combine with water, they form gluten. Gluten is both plastic and elastic. This quality means that it will hold the carbon dioxide produced by the yeast, and will not allow it to escape or break. It is this plasticity that allows bread to rise before it is baked, at which time the structure of the dough solidifies from the heat of the oven.

Commercially produced yeast first appeared in the United States in the 1860s. Charles and Maximilian Fleischmann, immigrants from Austria-Hungary who settled in Cincinnati, patented and sold standardized cakes of compressed yeast. By the early twentieth century, factory-produced yeast was widely available. Cookbook recipes began specifying that commercial yeast be added directly to bread dough in sufficient quantities to leaven it in less than two hours.

PROOFING IS THE FIRST STEP

Yeast, unlike baking soda and baking powder, is an organic leavening agent, which means that it must be “alive” in order to be effective. Overly high temperatures can kill yeast and, conversely, cold temperatures can inhibit the yeast’s action. That is why dry yeast should be refrigerated. It will keep for several months.

To make sure your dry yeast is alive, you should start with a step called “proofing.” Combine the yeast with warm liquid (110°F to 115°F) and a small amount of flour or sugar. If the water is any hotter, it might kill the yeast. Use a meat thermometer to take the temperature, or check to make sure it feels warm but not hot on the underside of your wrist.

Let the mixture rest at room temperature until a thick surface foam forms, which indicates that the yeast is alive and can be used. If there is no foam, the yeast is dead and should be discarded. After your proofing is successful, you are ready to make the dough.

THE NEED FOR KNEADING

To have the network of strands of gluten form properly, the proteins in the flour need to be physically coaxed. That is the process known as kneading. The same holds true for pasta dough.

I must admit that it has been many years since I kneaded dough by hand, because my stand mixer has a dough hook attachment. But I did knead a few of these recipes to calculate how much time it takes and also to observe the dough more closely.

When you start kneading dough, it’s a shaggy and sticky mass. When the gluten formation is complete and the dough is properly kneaded, it will be shiny to look at, springy to the touch, and no longer sticky. Those are the clues that your dough is ready to rise.

The right temperature is necessary for dough to rise. There are some tricks to creating a warm-enough temperature in a cold kitchen. Set a foil-covered electric heating pad on low, and put the bowl of dough on the foil; put the bowl in the dishwasher and set it for just the drying cycle; put the bowl in your gas oven to benefit from the warmth of the pilot light; put the bowl in any cold oven over a large pan of boiling-hot water.

Chemical Leavening Agents

The breads not give a rise by yeast in this chapter rely on chemical leavening agents—baking soda and baking powder.

Baking soda is also known by its official name, sodium bicarbonate. When heated, this chemical compound forms carbon dioxide gas to make quick breads rise. But here’s the problem. That’s not all it produces.

When heated, sodium bicarbonate also produces sodium carbonate, which has a nasty and unpleasant alkaline flavor. But if you mix baking soda with an acid like lemon juice or buttermilk, the sodium carbonate is partially neutralized and leaves behind less aftertaste. This acid also helps the carbon dioxide gas release more quickly.

Baking powder is basically just baking soda with an acid already added in, so there doesn’t have to be one elsewhere in the recipe. Each teaspoon of baking powder contains ¼ teaspoon baking soda; the remainder is acid and cornstarch. Baking soda is, as a result, four times as powerful as baking powder, so use only ¼ teaspoon baking soda for each teaspoon of baking powder in a recipe.

Chemical leavening is nothing new; Amelia Simmons used pearl ash in her book *American Cookery*, published in 1796. Because carbon dioxide is released at a faster rate through the acid-base reaction than through the fermentation process provided by living yeast, breads made with chemical leavening became known as “quick breads” more than a century ago.

TRANSFORMING QUICK BREADS INTO MUFFINS

The batter to make quick breads is identical to muffin batter, so they’re interchangeable; the only difference is the amount of time and at what temperature they are baked; it’s a logical progression. The smaller the item is, like a standard muffin, the hotter the oven.

A standard tray of a dozen muffins should be baked for 18 to 22 minutes at 400°F, oversized muffins bake for 20 to 25 minutes at 375°F, and quick breads bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour at 350°F.

Focaccia

Focaccia (pronounced foe-KAH-cha), that wonderful Italian bread, is one of the world's great nibble foods and it pairs wonderfully with just about all soups. It contains a fair amount of oil, so additional oil or butter isn't necessary to enjoy it, and it's flat, so it's perfect for splitting to encase the filling for a sandwich.

Serves 12 to 16

3 (¼-ounce) packages active dry yeast

2¼ cups warm water (110°F to 115°F), divided

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

7 cups all-purpose flour, divided, plus additional if necessary

½ cup olive oil, divided

1 teaspoon salt

Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper for sprinkling

Combine the yeast, ¾ cup warm water, sugar, and ½ cup flour in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and mix well. Set aside for about 10 minutes while the yeast proofs.

When the yeast looks frothy, add the remaining water, ⅓ cup of the oil, the remaining flour, and the salt, and beat at low speed until flour is incorporated to form a soft dough.

Place the dough hook on the mixer, and knead the dough at medium speed for 2 minutes. Raise the speed to high, and knead for an additional 3 to 4 minutes, or until the dough forms a soft ball and is springy. (If kneading by hand, it will take about 10 to 12 minutes.)

Lightly grease the inside of a large mixing bowl with olive oil. Add the dough, turning it so it is lightly greased all over. Cover the bowl loosely with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap or a damp tea towel, and place it in a warm, draft-free spot. Allow the dough to rise for 1 to 2 hours, or until it has doubled in bulk.

Place the oven racks in the middle and lowest positions. Place a lipped baking sheet on the lower rack. Preheat the oven to 450°F and generously oil a lipped 17 x 11-inch baking sheet. Bring a kettle of water to a boil, and have a spray bottle of water handy.

Punch the dough down, and gently press it into the oiled baking sheet. Allow the dough to rest for 5 minutes if it is difficult to work with. Cover the baking sheet with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap, and let the dough rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 30 minutes.

Make indentations in the dough at 1-inch intervals with oiled fingertips. Drizzle the top of the dough with the remaining oil, and sprinkle it with coarse salt and pepper.

Pour 1 cup of boiling water into the heated baking pan and place the bread above it on the upper rack. Spray the walls of the oven with the

spray bottle, close the oven door and wait 30 seconds, and then spray the oven walls again.

Bake the bread for 25 to 30 minutes, or until deep golden on top and pale golden on bottom. Transfer the bread to a wire cooling rack and serve warm or at room temperature.

NOTE: The bread, covered tightly in plastic wrap, can be kept at room temperature for up to 1 day, or refrigerated for up to 5 days.

Variations

- **Onion Focaccia:** Heat 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add 2 large sweet onions, thinly sliced, and toss to coat the onions with the oil. Cook over low heat, covered, for 10 minutes. Uncover the pan, raise the heat to medium-high, and sprinkle the onions with granulated sugar, salt, and pepper. Cook the onions, stirring frequently, for 12 to 15 minutes, or until medium brown. Spread the onions on top of the dough.
- **Parmesan Olive Focaccia:** Sprinkle the top of the dough with ¾ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, and dot it with chopped olives.
- **Herb Focaccia:** Sprinkle the top of the dough with ¾ cup chopped fresh herbs such as rosemary, basil, oregano, or some combination.
- **Meaty Focaccia:** Sprinkle the top of the dough with ¾ cup chopped pepperoni, salami, or prosciutto and ½ cup shredded whole-milk mozzarella cheese.
- **Garlic Focaccia:** Soak 6 garlic cloves, peeled and minced, in the olive oil for 2 hours before making the dough. Either strain and discard the garlic, or include it if you really like things garlicky.
- **Sun-Dried Tomato Focaccia:** Sprinkle the top of the dough with ¾ cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes packed in olive oil.

Bread Bowls

The popularity of bread bowls today validates that “everything old is new again.” After all, during the Middle Ages, stews were always served on slices of stale bread. Even if a soup is very thick, the bread bowls should only be filled just before being presented at the table. I have had better luck with bread bowls since I started crisping them in the oven before filling them.

Makes 6 to 8 bread bowls

2 (¼-ounce) packages active dry yeast

2 ½ cups warm water (110°F to 115°F), divided

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

7 cups all-purpose flour, divided, plus additional if necessary

3 tablespoons nonfat dry milk powder

½ cup olive oil, divided

1 teaspoon salt

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I started using nonfat dry milk powder in breads a few years ago when writing the book *Gluten-Free Breads* (Running Press, 2013). In addition to augmenting the nutritional profile of the breads with a healthy dose of calcium, the powder is high in protein, which helps the breads to rise, and keeps them moist once baked.

Combine the yeast, ¾ cup warm water, sugar, and ½ cup flour in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and mix well. Set aside for about 10 minutes while the yeast proofs.

When the yeast looks frothy, add the remaining water, dried milk powder, 2 tablespoons of the oil, remaining flour, and salt, and beat at low speed until the flour is incorporated to form a soft dough.

Place the dough hook on the mixer, and knead the dough at medium speed for 2 minutes. Raise the speed to high, and knead for an additional 3 to 4 minutes, or until the dough forms a soft ball and is springy. (If kneading by hand, it will take about 10 to 12 minutes.)

Lightly grease the inside of a large mixing bowl with olive oil. Add the dough, turning it so it is lightly greased all over. Cover the bowl loosely with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap or a damp tea towel, and place it in a warm, draft-free spot. Allow the dough to rise for 1 to 2 hours, or until it has doubled in bulk.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Punch down the dough and divide it into 6 to 8 pieces. Form each piece into a ball with greased hands and arrange them on the prepared baking sheet. Cover the baking sheet with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 30 minutes.

Place the oven racks in the middle and lowest positions. Place a lipped baking sheet on the lower rack. Preheat the oven to 425°F toward the end of the rising time. Bring a kettle of water to a boil, and have a spray bottle of water handy.

Pour 1 cup of boiling water into the heated baking pan and place the bread on the upper rack. Spray the walls of the oven with the spray bottle, close the oven door and wait 30 seconds, and then spray the oven walls again.

Bake the breads for 25 to 30 minutes, or until brown and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom. Cool the breads for 5 minutes, and then transfer them to a wire rack to cool completely.

Slice ¾ inch off the top of each bread with a serrated bread knife. Use your fingers to pull out the interior of the bread, leaving a ½-inch shell. (Save all the bread and tops for breadcrumbs.) Allow the bread to sit for at least 4 hours, or preferably overnight.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Brush the interiors of the bread bowls with the remaining olive oil and arrange them on a baking sheet. Bake them for 12 to 15 minutes, or until browned and crisp. Remove the bread bowls from the oven, fill with soup, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The breads can be baked, hollowed, and crisped up to 2 days in advance and kept at room temperature, tightly covered. Warm them in a 300°F oven for 5 minutes before filling them with soup.

Limpa

This Swedish version of rye bread, also known as Vörtlimpa, has a combination of aromatic spices and some orange zest too. The bread is wonderful with hearty bean soups and also with vegetable soups.

Serves 8

- 1 (¼-ounce) package active dry yeast
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¾ cup whole milk, heated to 110°F to 115°F
- 1½ to 1¾ cups all-purpose flour, divided
- ½ cup freshly squeezed orange juice
- 3 tablespoons molasses
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest
- 2 tablespoons caraway seeds, divided
- 1 teaspoon anise seed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup rye flour
- ½ cup quick oats (not instant or old-fashioned)
- 1 large egg white, beaten

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It's always easier to grate the zest off a citrus fruit before the juice is squeezed out of it. That's yet another reason to read a recipe from top to bottom before beginning it. The juice in this recipe is actually specified before the zest in the ingredient list, but it should be grated off first.

NOTE: The bread can be baked up to 1 day in advance. Don't cover it until it is completely cool, and then wrap it airtight with plastic wrap.

Combine the yeast, brown sugar, warm milk, and ⅓ cup all-purpose flour in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and mix well. Set aside for about 10 minutes while the yeast proofs.

When the yeast looks frothy, add the orange juice, molasses, butter, orange zest, 2 teaspoons caraway seeds, anise seed, salt, rye flour, oats, and remaining all-purpose flour, and beat at low speed until the flour is incorporated to form a soft dough.

Place the dough hook on the mixer, and knead the dough at medium speed for 2 minutes. Raise the speed to high, and knead for an additional 3 to 4 minutes, or until the dough forms a soft ball and is springy. (If kneading by hand, it will take about 10 to 12 minutes.)

Lightly grease the inside of a large mixing bowl with olive oil or softened butter. Add the dough, turning it so it is lightly greased all over. Cover the bowl loosely with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap or a damp tea towel, and place it in a warm, draft-free spot. Allow the dough to rise for 1 to 2 hours, or until it has doubled in bulk.

Grease a baking sheet. Punch down the dough, turn it out onto a floured surface, and knead it a few times. Form the dough into a 7-inch mound on the baking sheet. Cover it with a sheet of greased plastic wrap or a damp tea towel and allow it to rise for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until almost doubled in bulk.

Preheat the oven to 375°F toward the end of the rising time. Brush the top of the bread with the egg white and sprinkle with the remaining caraway seeds.

Bake the bread for 30 to 40 minutes, or until it is browned and sounds hollow when the bottom is tapped. Cool the bread for 5 minutes before serving.

Pretzel Rolls

These very easy rolls have a tantalizing texture that is like a cross between a light roll and a dense bagel because they're boiled briefly before they're baked. They really do taste like soft pretzels, and they pair beautifully with any thick and hearty soup.

Serves 8

- 1 (¼-ounce) envelope active dry yeast
- ⅓ cups warm water (110°F to 115°F), divided
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
- 2¾ cups bread flour, divided
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- Cornmeal for dusting
- ¼ cup baking soda
- 1 large egg white, beaten
- Kosher salt or coarse sea salt for sprinkling

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Grease another baking sheet and sprinkle it with cornmeal. Bring 8 cups of water to a boil in large saucepan over high heat. Add the baking soda and the remaining 2 tablespoons sugar. Add as many rolls as will fit comfortably in the pan and boil them for 1 minute per side, turning them gently with a slotted spatula. Allow the water to drain off them, and arrange the rolls on the cornmeal-dusted baking sheet. Repeat until all the rolls are blanched.

Brush the tops of the rolls with the egg white, and then sprinkle them with coarse salt. Use a razor blade and cut diagonal lines on the tops of the rolls.

Place the rolls in the center of the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 375°F. Bake the rolls for 20 to 25 minutes, or until brown and crusty. Cool the rolls for 5 minutes before serving.

NOTE: The rolls can be baked up to 1 day in advance and kept at room temperature, tightly covered with plastic wrap once cooled. You can reheat them in a 350°F oven for 5 minutes before serving.

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When making slashes in yeast dough, it's really important to use a razor blade or a very sharp serrated knife. If the cutting object isn't incredibly sharp the dough will deflate.

Combine the yeast, ¾ cup warm water, 1 table-spoon sugar, and ½ cup flour in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and mix well. Set aside for about 10 minutes while the yeast proofs.

When the yeast looks frothy, add the remaining water, remaining flour, and salt, and beat at low speed until the flour is incorporated to form a soft dough.

Place the dough hook on the mixer, and knead the dough at medium speed for 2 minutes. Raise the speed to high, and knead for an additional 3 to 4 minutes, or until the dough forms a soft ball and is springy. (If kneading by hand, it will take about 10 to 12 minutes.)

Lightly grease the inside of a large mixing bowl with olive oil. Add the dough, turning it so it is lightly greased all over. Cover the bowl loosely with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap or a damp tea towel, and place it in a warm, draft-free spot. Allow the dough to rise for 1 to 2 hours, or until it has doubled in bulk.

Grease a baking sheet. Punch the dough down and divide it into 8 pieces. Form each piece into a ball, and place the balls on the prepared baking sheet, flattening the tops of the balls lightly. Cover the baking sheet with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 30 minutes.

Crispy Herbed Breadsticks

What I'm after when serving bread with soup is a lot of crunch to contrast the soft texture of the foods swimming in the broth. That's why I adore these flavorful strips with herbs and cheese in the dough and a mixture of healthful and attractive seeds as a coating.

Serves 8

BREAD

- 1 (¼-ounce) package active dry yeast
- 1½ cups warm water (110°F to 115°F), divided
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 4¼ cups bread flour, divided
- ¼ cup freshly grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons *herbes de Provence*
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3 garlic cloves, minced (optional)

TOPPING

- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons poppy seeds
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons flaxseed
- 1 tablespoon caraway seeds

Combine the yeast, ¾ cup warm water, sugar, and ½ cup flour in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and mix well. Set aside for about 10 minutes while the yeast proofs.

When the yeast looks frothy, add the remaining water, remaining flour, Parmesan, *herbes de Provence*, salt, and garlic (if using). Beat at low speed until the flour is incorporated to form a soft dough.

Place the dough hook on the mixer, and knead the dough at medium speed for 2 minutes. Raise the speed to high, and knead for an additional 3 to 4 minutes, or until the dough forms a soft ball and is springy. (If kneading by hand, it will take about 10 to 12 minutes.)

Lightly grease the inside of a large mixing bowl with olive oil. Add the dough, turning it so it is lightly greased all over. Cover the bowl loosely with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap or a damp tea towel, and place it in a warm, draft-free spot. Allow the dough to rise for 1 to 2 hours, or until it has doubled in bulk.

Preheat the oven to 400°F and generously oil a lipped 17 x 11-inch baking sheet. Punch the dough down, and gently press it into the prepared baking sheet. Allow the dough to rest for 5 to 10 minutes if it is difficult to work with. Cut the dough into 1-inch strips horizontally and then cut the strips down the middle vertically using a pizza wheel or a sharp serrated knife. Cover the baking sheet with a sheet of oiled plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 30 minutes.

For the topping, beat the egg with 1 tablespoon cold water. Combine the poppy seeds, sesame seeds, flaxseeds, and caraway seeds in a small bowl. Brush the top of the dough with the egg wash and sprinkle the seeds evenly over the surface.

Bake the breadsticks for 20 to 30 minutes, or until deep golden on top and pale golden on bottom. Remove the pan from the oven and allow the bread to cool for 5 minutes. Cut along the score lines with a sharp serrated knife and serve immediately.

NOTE: The breadsticks, covered tightly in plastic wrap, can be kept at room temperature for up to 1 day, or refrigerated for up to 5 days.

Variation

Omit the *herbes de Provence* and garlic from the dough, and substitute an additional ½ cup of Parmesan for the seeds in the topping.

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Sesame seeds add more than delicious flavor to foods. These tiny seeds grown in almost all tropical regions are a very good source of copper and magnesium. Copper is known for its use in reducing some of the pain and swelling of rheumatoid arthritis. Magnesium is important in the functioning of both our respiratory and vascular systems.



Skillet Cornbread

Iron skillets make the best cornbread. It's that simple. By preheating the pan the sugar caramelizes and gives you a slightly crisp crust that forms a contrast to the buttery interior of the bread. This is wonderful served with any cream-based soup, and certainly with Southern soups like gumbo.

Serves 8

1½ cups finely ground yellow cornmeal

⅔ cup all-purpose flour

¼ cup granulated sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

¼ teaspoon salt

¾ cup buttermilk, shaken

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled

2 large eggs, at room temperature

1 cup canned cream-style corn

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Preheat the oven to 400°F and place a 10-inch ovenproof skillet in the oven as it preheats.

Combine the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a mixing bowl and whisk well. In another mixing bowl, combine the buttermilk, butter, eggs, and corn. Whisk well. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir well to combine.

Remove the skillet from the oven, add the oil, and tilt the pan around to coat it evenly. Scrape the batter into the skillet and spread it evenly. Bake the cornbread for 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Allow the bread to cool for 5 minutes before slicing. Serve hot or at room temperature.

NOTE: The cornbread can be baked up to 1 day in advance and kept at room temperature, loosely covered with plastic wrap.

Variations

- Substitute honey or maple syrup for the sugar.
- Add 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage to the batter.
- Add ¼ cup chopped pimiento to the batter and substitute ½ cup grated cheddar for ¼ cup of the cream-style corn.

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Corn is a good source of vitamin C and also contains lycopene, the chemical that gives tomatoes their red color. According to the American Dietetic Association, your body absorbs more healthful lycopene from canned corn—both whole-kernel and creamed—than it does from fresh corn.

Garlic and Cheese Bread

There are tons of occasions when time doesn't permit making your own bread from scratch, but slathering an artisan baguette from a good bakery with a mixture of butter, garlic, and herbs is a close second. This aromatic version is a hit every time I serve it.

Serves 6 to 8

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

4 to 6 garlic cloves, peeled

3 tablespoons fresh parsley

2 scallions, white parts and 4 inches of green tops, sliced

¾ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 (14-inch) French baguette

Preheat the oven to 375°F and line a baking sheet with heavy-duty aluminum foil.

Combine the butter, oil, garlic, parsley, scallions, ⅓ cup of the Parmesan, salt, and pepper in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. Chop very finely using on-and-off pulsing.

Cut the bread in half lengthwise and spread the butter mixture evenly on both halves. Sprinkle the remaining Parmesan on top.

Bake the bread for 10 to 12 minutes, or until browned and hot. Allow to cool for 2 minutes, then slice and serve immediately.

NOTE: The bread can be prepared for baking up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered with plastic wrap.

Variation

Omit the garlic, substitute Gruyère or cheddar for the Parmesan, and use 4 tablespoons of some combination of parsley, thyme, oregano, and tarragon in the butter mixture.

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I do not suggest making garlic bread on the grill, but it can be made in the oven broiler. Set the rack so that the baking sheet will be 8 inches from the heat source. Brush the bottom halves of the cut surfaces with olive oil and broil them for 1 to 1½ minutes, or until lightly browned and crisp. Turn the bread over, slather the butter on the cut sides, sprinkle with the cheese, and broil for 2 to 3 minutes, or until bubbly and brown.

Irish Soda Bread

Soda bread is easy to make, and the contrast of the sweet raisins and zesty caraway seeds dotting the dough enlivens its flavor. This is a wonderful chewy bread to serve with bean soups, regardless of the cuisine from which they come.

Serves 8

1½ cups all-purpose flour

1 cup whole-wheat flour

¼ cup granulated sugar

1½ teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1 cup buttermilk, shaken

1 large egg

¾ cup raisins, preferably a blend of colors

2 tablespoons caraway seeds, divided

1 tablespoon cornstarch

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The purpose of the cornstarch slurry is to act as "glue" for the remaining caraway seeds. It will also give the top of the bread a lovely patina. An alternative to cornstarch is an egg wash, but I prefer the cornstarch for rustic breads that are baked for a long time.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Generously grease a baking sheet.

Combine the all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large mixing bowl, and whisk well. Combine the butter, buttermilk, and egg in another mixing bowl, and whisk well.

Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, and stir to combine; the dough will be sticky. Stir in the raisins and 1 tablespoon of the caraway seeds.

Scrape the dough onto a heavily floured surface and knead it a few times to form it into a round loaf. Transfer the dough to the prepared baking sheet.

Combine the cornstarch and 2 tablespoons cold water in a small bowl, and stir well. Brush the mixture on top of the dough, and sprinkle with the remaining caraway seeds. Cut a large X about ¾ inch deep in the center of the dough.

Bake the bread in the center of the oven for 45 to 55 minutes, or until the crust is brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool the bread on the baking sheet for 10 minutes, then transfer it to a cooling rack. The bread can be served warm or at room temperature.

NOTE: The bread, covered tightly in plastic wrap, can be kept at room temperature for up to 1 day, or refrigerated for up to 5 days.

Variations

- Substitute dried currants for the raisins.
- Omit the raisins and caraway seeds and add 6 chopped scallions, white parts and 4 inches of green tops, to the dough.

Cheddar Beer Bread

Beer bread is the best of all worlds; it's a quick bread but it still delivers a yeasty flavor and aroma. Beer and bread share a common fermenting process; Yeast is used to turn sugar into alcohol. While you could make beer bread without baking soda or baking powder, the resulting bread is really dense, which is why I add additional leavening. This bread is a natural with hearty vegetable or bean soups.

Serves 8

- 1 large egg
- 1 (12-ounce) can or bottle of ale or other hearty dark beer
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 cup grated sharp cheddar cheese, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 3½ cups all-purpose flour
- Vegetable oil spray

Preheat the oven to 375°F and liberally grease a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan with vegetable oil spray.

Combine the egg, beer, and melted butter in a mixing bowl, and whisk well. Add ¾ cup of the cheese, baking powder, salt, and baking soda, and whisk well again. Add the flour, and mix gently until just combined.

Scrape the batter into the prepared pan, and level the top with a rubber spatula dipped in cold water. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese.

Bake the bread in the center of the oven for 45 to 55 minutes, or until it registers 210°F on an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center. Remove the bread from the oven and place the pan on a wire cooling rack for 5 minutes. Turn the bread out onto the rack, and allow it to cool to room temperature before slicing.

NOTE: The bread can be prepared up to 2 days in advance. Wrap it tightly with plastic wrap and store it at room temperature.

Variations

- Substitute olive oil for the melted butter and substitute ½ cup chopped sun-dried tomato and ¼ cup chopped black olives for the cheese.
- Substitute jalapeño Jack for the cheddar cheese and add 1 tablespoon ground cumin to the batter.
- Add 1 tablespoon *herbes de Provence* to the batter.

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Unlike making yeast bread, the very character of beer bread changes with which beer is selected. Lager gives you an aromatic loaf in which other ingredients emerge with stronger flavors, while an ale or stout really dominates the taste.

Buttermilk Biscuits

The secret to tender and flaky biscuits, the kind they always serve south of the Mason-Dixon Line, is using flour made from soft winter wheat that is low in protein so it doesn't form too much tough gluten. White Lily flour is the standard, although it's difficult to find outside its home region. That's why I developed this recipe using some cake flour. It replicates that heavenly texture nicely. There are a lot of Southern recipes in this book, and biscuits are the perfect bread to make with them.

Makes 12 to 14 biscuits

- 1¼ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the counter
- ¾ cup cake flour
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter, chilled and cut into ½-inch pieces, divided
- ¾ cup buttermilk, shaken

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Biscuits—moist, tender, and rich—can be baked as an alternative to a yeast-leavened bread, and they are made far more quickly than even baking powder-leavened quick breads. And there is an entire family of baked goods created with the same simple technique—English tea scones are biscuits with eggs, shortcakes are biscuits with a higher percentage of fat, cobblers are biscuits baked on top of fresh fruit, and dumplings are biscuits steamed on top of a stew.

Preheat the oven to 450°F, place a rack in the lower third, and grease a baking sheet.

Combine the all-purpose flour, cake flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in a food processor fitted with the steel blade. Pulse a few times to blend. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add the remaining butter to the food processor and cut it in using on-and-off pulsing until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Alternately, cut in the butter in a mixing bowl using a pastry blender or your fingertips.

Scrape the mixture into a mixing bowl, and make a well in the center. Add the buttermilk, and stir together quickly until a sticky dough forms.

Turn the dough out onto a well-floured surface, such as a counter or a pastry board, and knead it 10 times to create a bit more gluten. Pat the dough into a circle 1 inch thick. Cut out circles with a 2-inch cutter, and arrange them close together on the prepared baking sheet. Gather up the scraps of dough and form them into additional biscuits. Melt the reserved butter and brush it over the tops of the biscuits.

Bake the biscuits for 15 to 18 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve immediately.

NOTE: The biscuits can be formed and then frozen on a baking sheet. Allow them to sit at room temperature for 20 minutes before baking.

Variations

- Add ½ cup grated sharp cheddar and 1 (4-ounce) can chopped mild green chiles, drained well, to the dough.
- Add 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper to the dough.
- Add ¼ cup finely chopped scallions to the dough.

Parmesan Breadsticks

To me, crispy breadsticks, called *grissini* in Italian, are the ultimate carbohydrate to serve with soup; they're all crunch. This recipe is easy and fast to make because it calls for chemical leavening agents rather than yeast. What's also nice is that the breadsticks can double as a centerpiece if you place them in a drinking glass in the middle of the table.

Makes 20 breadsticks

⅓ cup all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

¼ cup rye flour

½ teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon granulated sugar

2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided

¼ cup buttermilk, shaken

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1 large egg

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon caraway seeds

1 tablespoon fennel seeds, crushed

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Once you've made these a few times and see how easy they are, you'll probably add them to your repertoire. You can spread half of a stick with a cheese like herbed Boursin and then wrap it in prosciutto or salami as a hors d'oeuvre.

Preheat the oven to 350°F, positioning the racks in the upper and lower thirds. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

Combine the all-purpose flour, rye flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, and ½ teaspoon kosher salt in a mixing bowl and whisk well. Combine the buttermilk and butter in a small cup and beat well.

Add the buttermilk mixture to the dry ingredients and stir to combine. Turn the dough onto a floured surface and knead it for 1 minute. Form the dough into a log, and cut it into 20 pieces. Roll each piece with your hands into an 8-inch rope, and arrange the ropes on the prepared baking sheets.

Beat the egg with 1 teaspoon water, and brush the egg wash onto the ropes, rolling them around to coat them completely. Sprinkle the ropes with the remaining salt, Parmesan, caraway seeds, and fennel seeds.

Bake the ropes in the upper and lower thirds of the oven for 20 to 22 minutes, or until brown and crisp. Switch the position of the sheets after 10 minutes. Transfer the *grissini* to wire racks to cool completely.

NOTE: The *grissini* can be prepared up to 3 days in advance and kept at room temperature in an airtight container.

Variations

- Substitute ¼ cup of sesame seeds for the Parmesan, caraway seeds, and fennel seeds.
- Add 1 tablespoon *herbes de Provence* to the dough and omit the caraway seeds and fennel seeds.



Popovers

Popovers are testimony to the power of eggs alone; they rise high with no yeast, baking powder, or other leavening agent. After experimenting for many years, I've concluded that baking them in Pyrex cups rather than muffin tins is best because the glass conducts heat so well. Everyone loves popovers, and they go with all soups, too.

Makes 8 popovers

3 large eggs, at room temperature

1 cup whole milk, at room temperature

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup all-purpose flour

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The key to perfect popovers is self-restraint. If the door is opened and a draft enters the oven, the chemistry of the popovers is ruined and you'll end up with thick crêpes because the batters are almost identical. Here's how the popover works: The high proportion of liquid in the batter creates steam that causes the popovers to puff up. The conversion of the liquid in the batter to steam is dramatic because 1 part liquid converts to 1600 parts steam. The proteins in the eggs cause the popover batter to stretch, hold the steam, and eventually solidify to form crusty walls. If you open the oven door, none of this happens.

Preheat the oven to 400°F and grease 8 (5-ounce) Pyrex cups heavily with softened butter.

Combine the eggs, milk, melted butter, and salt in a blender or food processor fitted with the steel blade. Blend until thoroughly mixed. Add the flour, and mix again, scraping down the sides of the bowl if flour is stuck to them.

Fill each greased cup halfway with the batter, and arrange the cups on a baking sheet. Bake the popovers in the center of the oven *without opening the oven door* for 35 to 40 minutes, or until brown and puffed.

Insert a paring knife into the side of each popover to allow steam to escape. Release the popovers from the cups with the tip of a knife, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The batter can be prepared up to 4 hours in advance and kept at room temperature. Mix it well again before filling the cups.

Variations

- Dust the greased cups with freshly grated Parmesan cheese and add 2 teaspoons *herbes de Provence* or Italian seasoning and 1 garlic clove pressed through a garlic press to the batter.
- Add 1 teaspoon grated lemon or orange zest to the batter.

Gougères

While these classic cheese puffs from Burgundy are served as a hors d'oeuvre, I really like them as an accompaniment to soups, too. Their crispy texture serves as a wonderful foil to all soups and I'm especially fond of serving them with puréed cream soups.

Makes about 4 dozen gougères

1 cup Chicken Stock (page 000) or purchased stock

6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter, cut into thin slices

½ teaspoon salt

Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

Pinch of freshly grated white pepper

1 cup all-purpose flour

4 large eggs

1 cup grated Gruyère

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Using stock rather than water in the dough creates a richer flavor. This is a trick taught to me by Bruce Tillinghast, a wonderful chef in Providence, who studied with the legendary Madeleine Kamman.

Preheat the oven to 400° F, and line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.

Combine the stock, butter, salt, nutmeg, and pepper in a small saucepan, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Remove the pan from the heat, and add the flour all at once. Using a wooden paddle or wide wooden spoon, beat flour into the liquid until it is smooth. Then place the saucepan over high heat and beat the mixture constantly for 1 to 2 minutes, until it forms a mass that leaves the sides of the pan and begins to film the bottom of the pot.

Transfer the mixture to a food processor fitted with the steel blade. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating well between each addition and scraping the sides of the work bowl between each addition. Then add the cheese, and mix well again.

Using a spoon dipped in cold water, form the dough into mounds 1 inch in diameter and ½ inch high onto the baking sheets, allowing 2 inches between puffs.

Bake the puffs for 20 to 22 minutes, or until golden brown and crusty to the touch. Remove the pans from the oven, and using the tip of a paring knife, cut a slit in the side of each puff to allow the steam to escape. Turn off the oven, and place the baked puffs back into the oven with the oven door ajar for 10 minutes to finish crisping. Remove the puffs from the oven, and serve immediately.

NOTE: The puffs can be made up to 2 days in advance and refrigerated, tightly covered; they can also be frozen for up to 2 months. Reheat chilled puffs in a 350°F oven for 5 to 7 minutes and frozen puffs for 10 to 12 minutes.

Variation

Substitute cheddar or jalapeño Jack for the Gruyère.

Socca

Socca, made with garbanzo bean flour, is a street food unique to Nice and other parts of France's sun-drenched Côte d'Azur. This delicious flatbread shows the influence of North Africa on the northern coast of the Mediterranean, and it's scented with garlic and rosemary. Serve it with any French, Italian, or Spanish soup.

Serves 6

- 1 cup garbanzo bean flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary, divided
- 5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced

Combine the garbanzo bean flour, salt, and pepper in a mixing bowl. Slowly whisk in 1 cup of lukewarm water until smooth. Whisk in 1 tablespoon of the rosemary, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, the shallots, and the garlic. Allow the batter to sit for at least 2 hours.

Place one oven rack in the broiler position and place the other one in the center of the oven. Preheat the oven to 450°F with a 12-inch skillet in it, heating the skillet for 10 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons of oil to the skillet and tilt the pan around to coat it evenly. Add the batter and bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the edges of the pancake are set.

Remove the skillet from the oven and preheat the oven broiler. Broil the bread 6 inches from the broiler element for 2 to 3 minutes, or until firm and brown spots appear. Brush the bread with the remaining oil, sprinkle with the remaining rosemary, and serve hot.

NOTE: The batter can sit at room temperature for up to 12 hours.

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Garbanzo bean is one of the legumes ground into flour that is used frequently in gluten-free baking, so you will find it with those ingredients at supermarkets or it can be ordered online. Most gluten-free protein flours have far more nutritional value than all-purpose wheat flour too.

Acknowledgments

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