

CHAPTER TWO

S
Soup
& for
Swapping





It's hard to make soup for one.

That's obvious, sure. But Knox Gardner has turned that simple truth into a movement.

In 1999, Knox, tired of having to repeat meals to finish off a pot of soup, called a couple of friends and asked them to come over. Bring your own homemade soup parceled out into small containers, he said. He'd been playing a lot of Pit—the stock-trading card game—and envisioned some friendly horse trading around the dining room table: I'll give you two corn chowders for one of those minestrone...

The trading turned out to be bit more free-form than that, but in the years that followed, Soup Swap Day became a winter tradition for his circle. Then when Knox moved from Seattle to Boston, his friends decided they didn't need him to stoke the fire. Instead, they coordinated. East coast and west both held a swap on the same day—and National Soup Swap Day was born.

Now hundreds of swappers celebrate National Soup Swap Day in January, posting recipes, video testimonials, and news of swaps scheduled nationwide to Knox's website, soupswap.com—not to mention links to the press coverage that's followed everywhere from *USA Today* to the *Siskiyou Daily News*.

"Soup is such a weird food," says Knox, who's since moved back to Seattle. "It's tied very much to comfort and tradition and community and sharing. I never thought about it before I started this thing, but now for sure I get it." No one has to be a slave to his schedule, he adds. Busy on National Soup Swap Day? "Swap when you can!"

On his website, Knox lays out the guidelines for a successful swap. Get some friends—preferably ones who like soup—and pick a place to swap. Ask each person to bring six quarts of soup divided into quart-size servings (say, freezer bags or yogurt containers) labeled with the ingredients. If six quarts seems onerous, shoot for four, or, as my friend Bonnie did when she threw a swap, a tidy three. Everyone draws a number, and you go around the group in order taking turns picking soups till everything's

been taken.

Knox says the best part is before the swapping starts, when every swapper steps up to say a little something about his or her soup.

“In Seattle we’ll have 20 soups,” he says. “And we have people who come to our soup swap who have never met, ever—but they get up in front of this room of people and they say, ‘I made this soup and it’s my grandma’s recipe and it has this and that, or that’—and it’s just awesome, it’s a really powerful moment.”

Serious swappers can get competitive. Knox says he’s heard tall tales about soups made from grain hand-washed by Swedish virgins and ancient family recipes passed in secret down through the generations.

But it’s all in good fun—and sometimes surprising connections are made. After Knox mentioned on his site that he and his male partner were working on adopting a baby, he got an email from a fellow swapper in rural Ohio. “She’s very conservative, and she runs a blog, all about Jesus, and she and her husband have adopted five Russian children,” Knox said. “And she sent us a note, and it just started this three-month-long exchange that was just awesome—this conversation about adoption with this woman who I would never have met otherwise, and who I thought, from her blog, would be really against me and my partner adopting.”

Soup swaps have been slow to catch on in big cities like New York and Chicago, but according to Knox they’re hot in smaller communities—something he attributes to stronger traditions of home cooking and church suppers. And the country real estate can’t hurt—it’s hard to host a swap in a studio apartment.

Whatever the reason, my experience supports Knox’s generalization: I wanted to swap some soup for “research,” but attempts to find a swap in the Chicago area were fruitless, and, yes, my own apartment is tiny. I finally convinced Bonnie to do the honors.

On a chilly February Sunday two dozen friends and neighbors—one from across the hall—descended on the duplex apartment Bonnie shares with her husband, Ted, two children, and two cats. It had been a rough week: Ted had just lost his job and Bonnie was only working part-time, but she was determined to put a positive spin on their predicament: “More time for cooking—and swapping!” she said, brandishing a wooden spoon.

Bonnie made a cream of artichoke soup from the first edition of the *Soup & Bread Cookbook* (the recipe’s reprinted here on page 168). When she ran it through the blender, it turned a distressing shade of khaki, so she freestyled, tossing in bits of parsley till it developed an enticing shade of green.

“Making this soup taught me that I could riff on a recipe,” she said when she introduced her soup, adding that she made it for Ted, who had never eaten an artichoke until they met.

The artichoke soup shared a crowded table with tubs and jars and ziplock bags full of wild mushroom, hot and sour, chicken tortilla, and two versions of butternut squash soup. Some were fancy—Molly, a former coworker of Bonnie’s, accessorized each container of her pumpkin soup with a little baggie of Parmesan and a small green apple, to be sprinkled and sliced, respectively, on top. (See page 47 for Molly’s own soup story.) Jessica, a journalist, apologized for the no-frills look of her vegan split pea soup, which she’d delivered in plastic tubs swiped from the hot bar at Whole Foods.

Kate, Ted’s sister, brought three different soups, all whipped up by her Polish babysitter—pickle soup, white borscht, and a chicken and split pea concoction called “zupka,” which simply means “soup.” Kate’s presentation was met with sighs, the babysitter’s soup skills being, apparently, the stuff of neighborhood legend.

In three lightning rounds it was all gone: First the wild mushroom, then the hot and sour, the onion, and the chicken tortilla (with chips, cheese, and cilantro on the side). Jessica’s split pea was one of the last to go. “Oh, wait! Look!” she quipped to her neighbor. “Someone’s touching it!”

Later I asked Guy and Kristin—an actor/meat eater and a photographer/vegetarian—how they prepared for their first swap. The veggie butternut squash with jalapeno they supplied was a favorite recipe and a no-brainer, they said. But they engaged in “an embarrassingly long discussion on the merits of a ziplock bag (Kristin) versus a firm container (Guy).” Guy won, and Kristin gussied the Tupperware up with kitchen twine and cards inked with the recipe.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to choosing soups for swapping. One says bring on the crowd-pleasers—the tried and true classics, like good old chicken noodle and split pea. The other says to swing for the bleachers and show your friends something they’ve never seen before. Both schools are represented by the ten recipes here—but all are easy to make and should freeze well. Skip to the end for the specs for some classic homestyle yeast rolls and a decadent cheese bread.

Next time, said Bonnie, “I’m giving out door prizes—like, for most colorful soup and best packaging.”

When I asked Knox Gardner what he got out of being the soup swap mastermind, he replied, “I get soup in my freezer, that’s about it,”—though he said—was thinking of maybe selling Soup Swap aprons online to at least cover the cost of his server. “That, and warm and fuzzy feelings.”

Bonnie agreed that hosting a swap was an end in itself. A few days after the swap she and Ted ate their friend Fran’s spinach soup for lunch together, at home, without children. “We were really happy—it’s the most we’ve laughed in a long time,” she said. “There’s certainly some joy to be had in not working.”

MINESTRONE

from
CAMILLE SEVERINO

The great thing about minestrone, points out Camille, is that it can absorb whatever you like, or whatever you've got lying around. For vegetables she suggests carrots, celery, zucchini, yellow squash, and green beans, but leafy greens like spinach and escarole are also good, and corn and okra can give it a southern flair. For a twist, she also suggests subbing black beans for the kidney beans.

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 8-12

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 3-4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 4 cups (or so) of cut-up vegetables, whatever you like (can be frozen)
- water
- 1 can garbanzo beans
- 1 can red kidney beans
- salt and pepper
- bay leaf
- 2 cups ditalini pasta
- grated Romano cheese



PREPARATION

Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil in large pot until soft, over medium heat. Add your vegetables and cover with water. Salt and pepper to taste. Pop in the bay leaf and let cook until the vegetables are soft. Add your beans, simmer for 20 minutes, then add the pasta and simmer for another ten minutes. Remove bay leaf and add grated cheese. Eat. Easy peasy.

Camille Severino is a fan of cooking soup and an even bigger fan of feeding people; she organizes the annual Jambalaya Cookoff at FitzGerald's Nightclub in Berwyn, Illinois.



GILLS' BOUNTIFUL VEGETABLE SOUP

from

SHEILA SACHS

Bountiful for sure, and bursting with basil—this vegetable soup has a Mediterranean kick thanks to the pesto topping, which fancifies it as well. It was prepared by Sheila for Soup & Bread in honor of our Kickstarter donors Jim and Sue Gill, whose generous contribution helped fund the publication of the first edition of our cookbook. Thanks Gills!

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 10

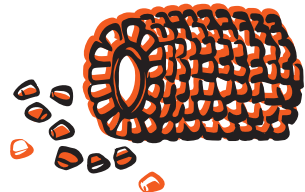
SOUP

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 2 medium carrots, sliced into discs
- 1 medium rib celery, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 10 cups stock, vegetable or chicken
- 4 medium new potatoes, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes or 2 large tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped
- ¼ teaspoon summer savory (or ⅛ teaspoon marjoram and ⅛ teaspoon thyme)
salt and fresh ground black pepper
- 1 medium zucchini, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 1 medium yellow squash, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- 2 ears corn, kernels cut from cob (or 1½ cups frozen)
- ¼ pound green beans, trimmed and cut into 1-inch lengths
- ½ cup elbow macaroni
- ½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh basil, chopped

BASIL PESTO

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

- 2 cups fresh basil leaves
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1¼ cups olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted



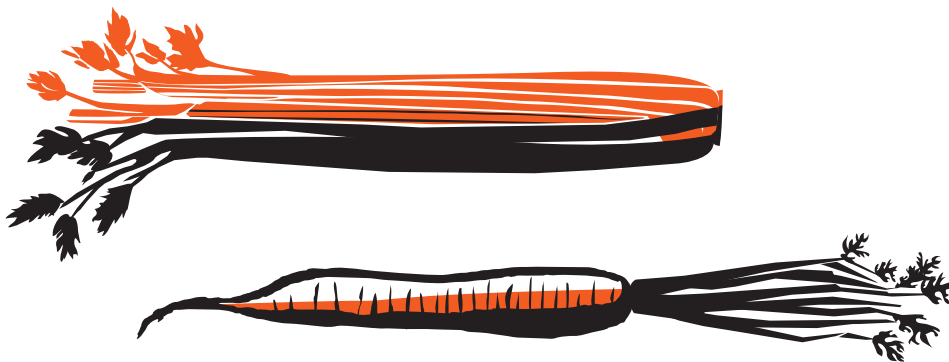
PREPARATION

SOUP: Heat oil in a large soup pot. Add onions, carrots, and celery. Sauté until vegetables soften, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add stock, bring to a simmer, and simmer 1-2 minutes.

With the soup base at a simmer, add potatoes, tomatoes, summer savory; salt to taste and simmer for 30 minutes. Add squashes, corn, and beans and simmer 5 minutes. Add macaroni and simmer until pasta is done, about 10 minutes. Stir in parsley and basil. Season with additional salt, if necessary, and pepper to taste. Serve with basil pesto dollop.

PESTO: Puree basil and garlic with olive oil in a food processor. Blend in salt, cheese and nuts. (This will yield more than you'll need, but pesto can be frozen and will keep in the refrigerator for up to three weeks.)

The Gill family lives in Oak Park, IL, where they preside over a bountiful vegetable garden. Sheila Sachs is a graphic designer living in Chicago. She designed this book you are holding.



CREAM OF MUSHROOM SOUP

from
KNOX GARDNER

Knox not only graciously answered all my questions about soup swaps when I contacted him out of the blue, he also whipped up this savory and oh-so-smooth cream of mushroom soup for Soup & Bread night in Seattle. The recipe is adapted from *S.O.U.P.S.: Seattle's Own Undeniably Perfect Soups*, by Michael Congdon, chef at that city's Hopvine pub.

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 12

- 1 large baking potato
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon truffle oil
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1-2 shallots
- 1-2 cloves of garlic
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup cream sherry
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds white mushrooms, chopped
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- black peppercorns
- salt
- 4 bay leaves
- 2 cups cream
- several sprigs of thyme



PREPARATION

Bake potato at 500°F for 30-45 minutes or microwave. When a fork or knife can be inserted smoothly, it is done. Let cool.

Melt the butter in a large stock pan, and add the truffle oil. Add the garlic, shallots, and onions, stirring occasionally until they begin to caramelize—this could take as long as 20 minutes. When the onions are soft, gooey, and brown, add ¼ cup of the sherry and make sure to get all the tasty bits that may be stuck at the bottom of the pan.

Now add the mushrooms and the rest of the sherry. Cover for 5-10 minutes to let the mushrooms reduce.

Add 2 cups of the stock, along with 1 teaspoon peppercorns, 1 teaspoon salt, and the bay leaves. Cook for 30 minutes or until all the ingredients are soft.

In batches, puree the mushroom and onion mix while adding chunks of the potato for more structure, putting the resulting mix into a clean pot if possible. Adding only a few ladles at a time to a blender or food processor (too much and you'll end up with hot soup all over your kitchen!), alternate between the hot mushroom mixture and pieces of potatoes with additional stock.

Once the mushrooms, potatoes, and stock have been blended together (and you may have two pots going now) add the 2 cups of cream along with a fistful of fresh, chopped thyme. Bring to a simmer and adjust the taste with salt and pepper.

Ideally, you'd chill this soup for a day or two for the flavor to develop, but if you don't have time, it ought to still taste delicious.

As with all cream soups, it's important to reheat slowly and gently. Present with a drop or two of truffle oil.

Knox Gardner lives in Seattle and has been swapping soup since 1999.

WEST TOWN TAVERN WILD MUSHROOM CHOWDER

from
SUSAN GOSS

Chef Susan Goss says this is probably the heartiest of the soups in regular rotation at the cozy Chicago restaurant she owns with her husband, Drew. They may call it a tavern, but the food is far from pub grub. This soup is rich and sophisticated on its own, but the crunchy, funky blue cheese croutons kick it to a new level entirely. (For more of Susan's thoughts on soup see page 162.)

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 6

SOUP

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 large yellow onion, peeled, finely chopped
- 4 cups chopped mixed mushrooms (cremini, shiitake, oyster and the like)
- 1½ cups carrot, small dice
- 2⅓ cups peeled potato, small dice
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled, smashed, minced (about 1 tablespoon)
- ½ cup dry sherry
- 5⅓ cups water or vegetable stock
- 2 large bay leaves
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1⅓ cups heavy cream
- kosher salt, to taste
- ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon bottled hot sauce
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves, minced

BLUE CHEESE CROUTONS

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

- 2 cups French bread cubes, about 1 inch by 1 inch
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 ounces blue cheese, crumbled

PREPARATION

CROUTONS: In a small saucepan over low heat, combine the butter and cheese. Melt the butter and cheese, stirring occasionally until smooth. Pour butter mixture over bread cubes and toss gently to mix.

Spread bread cubes onto a cookie sheet and separate as much as possible. Scrape any remaining butter mixture over cubes.

Bake bread cubes in the oven 7 minutes. Turn gently with a spatula and bake until golden brown and crisp, about 5 more minutes. Let croutons cool completely before using. Store croutons covered at room temperature up to 24 hours.

SOUP: In a large saucepan over medium heat, heat the oil and sauté the onion until tender and browned, about 7 minutes. Add the mushrooms, cover the pan and lower the heat. Steam the mushrooms for 5 minutes until they begin to give up their juices. Uncover the pan, raise the heat to medium, and sauté the mushrooms until they are tender, another 7-10 minutes. Add the carrots, potatoes, and garlic and stir well. Add the sherry and bring to a boil. Boil until sherry reduces to a glaze, about 2-3 minutes.

Add the water. Tie the bay leaves and thyme sprigs together and add to the saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer the soup until the potatoes and carrots are tender, about 20 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaves and thyme sprigs.

Add the cream and return the soup to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer until the cream is slightly reduced, about 10 minutes more. Season the soup with salt and pepper and stir in the Worcestershire, hot sauce, and minced thyme.

If desired, transfer 1 cup of soup to a blender and puree. Return puree to the saucepan and stir well. Serve garnished with blue cheese croutons.

Susan Goss is chef and co-owner of Chicago's West Town Tavern. She's the author of *West Town Tavern: Contemporary Comfort Food*, published in December 2010.

BUTTERNUT AND ACORN SQUASH SOUP

from

JACK NEWELL

Jack adapted this from a recipe in Eric Ripert and Michael Ruhlman's book *A Return to Cooking*, which Jack describes as “half cookbook, half L.L. Bean magazine starring Eric Ripert doing different rustic, food-related things, all the while looking fabulous.” It's a great showcase for the rich, pure flavors of the squash, and very easy to prepare.

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 8

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup sliced yellow onion
- 2 cups peeled and diced acorn squash
- 2 cups peeled and diced butternut squash
- fine sea salt
- fresh ground white pepper (fresh and white are very important here)
- 5 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 3 thyme sprigs
- 3 ounces sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 nutmeg—for grating
- honey (optional)
- cayenne (optional)
- minced ginger (optional)

PREPARATION

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until translucent, about 3 minutes. Add squash and sauté until softened, about 10 minutes. Cover with the chicken stock and bring to a simmer, cook until squash is tender, about 30 minutes.

Decant soup into a food processor or blender and puree until satiny-smooth, or use an immersion blender to puree in the pot. If you like, pass soup through a mesh sieve to remove any particulate matter. Return soup to pot. Add cream and remaining 4 tablespoons of butter. Bring to a simmer.

Wrap the thyme in cheesecloth and tie the package with the string. Add to the simmering soup and let it infuse for 10 minutes. Remove the thyme. Add the cheese, grated nutmeg, honey, and cayenne (if using), plus salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

Jack Newell is a filmmaker living and working in Chicago. He teaches directing at Columbia College Chicago.

GREEN CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

from

JILL BARRON

Chef Jill Barron does strange and wonderful things with ostensibly simple vegetarian food, and this soup was no exception. Right off the bat, the color upends your preconceptions—you hear “squash” and the last thing you expect is pale pea-green soup. Then, the unassuming color sets you up to expect something mild, but it’s not—at all. The spice sneaks up on you, but once arrived, it provides a potent blast of flavor.

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 8

SOUP

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 1 large butternut squash, seeded and roasted
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon salt

GREEN CURRY

- 1 stalk of lemongrass, chopped
- 1 Serrano chili
- 1 shallot
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2 inch piece of ginger, peeled and sliced
- ½ bunch cilantro, washed and chopped (stems are OK)
- ½ cup basil leaves
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon coriander
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 can coconut milk

PREPARATION

SOUP: In a large stockpot over medium heat, sauté onion in olive oil until soft and fragrant. Scoop out squash and add to pot, along with stock, sugar, and salt. Cook until soft, then add 1 cup green curry. Puree with immersion blender and serve, garnished with a lime wedge.

CURRY: Puree all together in blender till smooth.

Jill Barron is chef/owner of Mana Food Bar in Chicago.

WAYWARD CATHOLIC CHICKEN SOUP

from

KERRI HARROP

Kerri brought this chicken soup to our first Soup & Bread in Seattle, which went down on January 30, 2011, at the Funhouse, a punk-rock bar near Seattle Center. Kerri turned out to be one of those people who knows everyone in town—she knew three of the other soup cooks that night, though the three had never met each other. As for her soup, she says: “Little old Jewish ladies get all the props for good chicken soup, but I grew up eating bowls of my Nana’s Irish-Catholic version, which gets its designation by the omission of matzoh balls and the addition of crackers. Very Body of Christ, without all the Latin.”

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 10

- 1 whole chicken
- 1 sweet onion
- 4-5 stalks of celery
- 4-5 nice looking carrots
- 1-2 cloves of garlic
- coarse sea salt and fresh ground pepper
- olive oil
- egg noodles
- saltine crackers



PREPARATION

First, you gotta roast a chicken for dinner, one or two days before you make soup. I like to rub the bird with olive oil and a secret blend of herbs and spices, stick a lemon (halved) in its cavity, and stuff garlic under its skin. After you have dinner, put the leftovers in the fridge, including all the bones.

The next day, remove the meat from the bird’s cold carcass and make some stock. (See page 192 for a recipe.) Save the meat and put it back in the fridge.

Now, the soup: Chop the onion up nicely, and sauté it in some olive oil. The pot you are using to cook it is your soup pot, so make sure it is big enough. Once the onion is getting soft and pretty, throw in a clove or two of minced garlic. Don’t let it get too brown.

While this is going on, you should have been getting your chicken meat ready. How you do that is up to you. If you like it shredded, go for it. If you like chunks, get chopping. Mix it up both ways if you want.

Add the meat to your onion and garlic, and give it a little stir. The chicken is already cooked, so don’t overdo it. Once everything has gotten to know each other, throw in your chicken stock. (If you don’t have enough, you can use some store-bought—just

make sure it isn't gross. Spend the extra money.)

Reduce the heat and cover. Now, chop up your celery and carrots and throw that veg in the pot. Do you like other stuff in your chicken soup? Go ahead and add it. Sometimes fresh green beans are lovely, or maybe some English peas. Have a tomato that is about to go south? It can go in the pot, no big whoop.

Add salt and pepper. Don't be stingy. Now, just let it simmer all day. Hopefully you have a baguette on hand, so you can dunk it in and taste the soup when the smell is just driving you crazy with hunger.

There are a few schools of thought when it comes to adding noodles. Me, I wait until the last half hour or so. The longer those noodles are in the soup, the more they will soak up the broth. They will expand, and that is not a bad thing, but I like them a little more controlled.

Whatever you do, make sure you boil the noodles first in a separate pot. If you just throw in dry noodles, the soup will be too starchy. Don't like noodles? Try rice! Want your soup to be more like a stew? Use potatoes! Feeling weird? Throw in a yam, or some squash. Just make sure you boil all this stuff to at least al dente before you add it.

Starving? Have a bowl of soup. Crumble up some saltines on top—it is delicious. If you are feeling fancy, you can sprinkle some chopped parsley on top. Use the Italian version—it is way better. Drink some red wine with it. Almost everything is better with red wine. My Nana would agree.

Seattle native Kerri Harrop is a longtime DJ/writer/community activist/blabbermouth who “loves to cook good food for nice humans and does not trust anyone who says they don't like Led Zeppelin.”



TANGY CHICKEN TORTILLA SOUP

from

HELEN ROSNER

I'm not sure if it's an effect of Rick Bayless winning *Top Chef Masters* or what, but 2010 saw an inordinate number of chicken tortilla soups pass through the Soup & Bread pots. This was one of two chicken tortilla soups at our event at the Bell House, in Brooklyn. In her note to me Helen apologized for using so many store-bought elements—noting that she'd planned to cook from scratch but ran out of time. To which I say, "No shame in store-bought." Aspirations aside, most of us aren't living in an Alice Waters paradise—and besides, her soup was really good. It's comforting, as chicken soup should be, but with a sophisticated degree of heat and pizzazz.

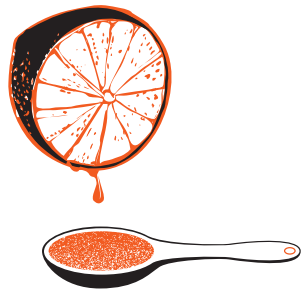
INGREDIENTS

SERVES 8-10

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small jalapeno, seeds and ribs removed, minced
- 1 store-bought rotisserie chicken, skin discarded and meat coarsely shredded (about 3 cups)—keep the carcass to make stock!
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes (or, if it's summer, fresh tomatoes: skinned, seeded, and diced, juice reserved)
pinch cumin
pinch onion powder (not onion salt)
- 2 tablespoons salt
juice of 4 limes (about ½ cup)
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce*
- 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar

GARNISH

- tortilla chips
- diced avocado
- minced cilantro
- sour cream
- lime wedges



PREPARATION

Heat the oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 20-30 seconds. Add the minced jalapeno and sauté another 10-15 seconds. Dump in the shredded chicken and incorporate the garlic/pepper mixture; turn up the heat to medium. Folding constantly, sauté until the garlic is just barely browning, then remove from the pot and reserve.

Combine the chicken stock, tomatoes, spices, salt, and lime juice in the same pot and heat until gently simmering. Add the lime juice and hot sauce and return the pot to a simmer, skimming any foam. Stir in the reserved chicken/garlic/chili mixture. Simmer for 10 minutes, or until the tomatoes and chicken have slightly disintegrated.

While the soup is cooking, prepare the garnishes: Dice avocado (toss it with lime juice to keep it from browning), mince cilantro, slice limes into wedges, crush your tortilla chips, whatever is to your taste. (If you're swapping, consider wrapping the garnish up in little packages for added swap-peal.)

Just before serving, remove the soup from the heat and stir in the white wine vinegar. To serve, I prefer to fill the bowls with the tortilla chips first, then the soup, then the other garnishes, but it's all the same in the end.

*A note on hot sauce: I used Sriracha, which I use for everything. You could of course substitute something more tortilla-appropriate like Cholula, but the key is a sauce that's as much about flavor as heat. Even if you like things spicy, I'd advise against adding extra hot sauce to the cooking soup to taste—the broth should be clear and almost delicate, with a balance among the meaty chicken, sour lime, sweet tomato, and hot sauce. (This is basically a kluged Mexican-style tom yum.) Serve extra hot sauce with the garnish and add to taste.

Helen Rosner is the web editor for *Saveur* magazine. She was the founding editor of the blog Grub Street Chicago, an editor of Grub Street New York, and the books editor for EatMeDaily.com She lives in New York, where she doesn't cook nearly as often as she'd like to.

SPLIT PEA SOUP WITH BLACK FOREST HAM

from

AMY LOMBARDI

Amy made this surprisingly low-fat soup twice during the 2009 Soup & Bread season. It is super satisfying, mildly infused with the characteristic smokiness of ham but retaining more of the pure flavor of the protein-rich peas. Says Amy, “I’m not a fan of an overwhelmingly hammy flavor in this soup which is one reason I don’t use a hock. Plus, parts that release that kind of flavor also render too much fat, which gives me a tummy ache and takes over the whole soup. I like a lighter version, where the peas and carrots have equal billing with the pork.”

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 6

- 2** tablespoons olive oil
- 2** cups chopped carrots (bite-size pieces)
- 1-1½** cups Black Forest ham (also chopped into bite-size niblets)
- 2-3** medium garlic cloves (minced)
- 1** pound bag dry split peas
- 1** bay leaf
- 1** teaspoon thyme (optional)
- 1** tablespoon unsalted butter
- 10** cups water (hold 2 in reserve)
- sea salt and fresh ground pepper

PREPARATION

Strain and rinse peas. Dig around and remove any stones or unsightly shells.

Heat a large soup pot or Dutch oven to medium low and add olive oil. Add carrots, ham, and garlic and cook slowly, about 7-10 minutes, stirring a bit here and there. Lower heat if any browning occurs.

Turn heat up to medium high, add peas, bay leaf, thyme, butter, and 8 cups water. Stir (from the bottom) and cook for 30-40 minutes, occasionally giving a turn (again, from the bottom). Take note of the soup's consistency; the peas should be starting to absorb the water, allowing the soup to thicken. If this is not happening, cook for another 10 minutes uncovered, then stir and proceed to next step.

Turn heat down to low, add 1 teaspoon sea salt, stir, cover, and cook for 15 minutes. Soup should have a few inches of water on top, but will thicken when stirred. If it seems too thick, add more water ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time) and cook for another 10 minutes. Remove bay leaf, add fresh ground pepper to taste. Serve with sliced, toasted ciabatta.

Amy Lombardi lives in Austin, Texas, managing the careers of Neko Case, Kelly Hogan, and My Gold Mask, while simultaneously squeezing her dogs and kitty cat.



HUMMUS SOUP

from

MICHAEL GEBERT

The humble vegetarian trappings of this soup are deceptive; it's built on a smoky bacon stock and finished with a crispy garnish of fried Spanish ham. It's adapted from Anya von Bremzen's *The New Spanish Table* and Mike dished it up at Soup & Bread in 2009. Says he, "The underlying concept is so simple: It's basically making any split pea soup recipe with chickpeas instead of split peas. I make soup by feel—if you need more precision than below, check out her original recipe."

INGREDIENTS

SERVES 12

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 leek, white part sliced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 6-8 cups of water
- 1 hunk of bacon or ham or salt pork or smoked ham hock or any flavorful hunk of pork; the more flavor it has, the better your soup will be, so choose wisely.
- 2 15-ounce cans of chickpeas, with most but not all of their liquid poured off
- olive oil
- smoked paprika
- jamon iberico (or serrano)

PREPARATION

Put onion (including discarded tops), carrot, leek, and garlic in stockpot with a little olive oil, and fry fairly low for 2-3 minutes, then cover pot and cook 5-7 minutes more. Add water and the hunk of pork. Let simmer for a couple of hours, partly covered, until it makes a nice stock.

Meanwhile, heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of olive oil in a pan over low heat till almost hot. Remove from heat and sprinkle 1 heaping teaspoon of smoked paprika into it. Let sit for 45 minutes, then pour off oil into small bowl or jar, leaving paprika behind.

Add chickpeas to stock, and let simmer for another hour.

Remove pork and save for at least one more use. Season to taste—salt and pepper only.

If it needs sharpening, give it a little slug of sherry vinegar. But be sparing! If you can taste the vinegar, you've used too much.

Fry a couple of slices of jamon iberico or serrano in a pan till they just start to crisp up. Remove and cut into ¼-inch squares. They will continue crisping after frying.

Puree and serve with a few dribbles of the paprika oil and a pinch of the jamon—but not too much, as it's salty and strong and will affect the flavor quickly.

Michael Gebert is a freelance food writer and the creator of skyfullofbacon.com, a Chicago-based video podcast and food blog.

Every Day Is Soup Day

More than 30 years ago, Molly Fitzgibbon's grandma, frustrated by the difficulty of corralling her extended family for Thanksgiving and Christmas, invented her own family holiday: Soup Day.

Soup Day could be any old date—one year it was scheduled for the day of her hometown's Christmas parade; another year it celebrated an aunt's 90th birthday—but one day each year, when sons and daughters and aunts and uncles had no competing obligations, they'd all get together and eat soup.

Everyone would bring a soup—except Aunt Dollie, who provided hot ham-and-cheese sandwiches. The annual event is now a cherished family tradition, and one that Molly brought with her when she moved to Chicago from New Jersey.

An actor with a day job at the Chicago Park District, Fitzgibbon has found that her friends and colleagues have taken to Soup Day with a vengeance. One year she had 70 guests—and 18 different soups.

"It's just great to have this day that's just about getting together to eat and have a good time," says Molly. "Everyone should do it."



MEMAW'S YEAST ROLLS

from

CARA TILLMAN

Cara surprised us with these simple, flaky rolls made from her Grandma's recipe one night in 2010—and, well, we gobbled them up. They're best if served still warm. "They're based on a basic bread recipe that southern cooks have been making for many years," says Cara. "And they can be tweaked to suit different dietary needs and preferences." For vegan rolls, for example, swap out the butter and milk for vegetable oil and a bit more water .

INGREDIENTS

MAKES 15 ROLLS

- 1 cup warm water
- 1 package yeast
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ melted butter, cooled (or vegetable oil)
- enough all-purpose flour to make dough stiff, about 5-6 cups

PREPARATION

Mix yeast and sugar in a large bowl. Briefly work these two ingredients together with your fingers, as sugar helps activate yeast. Add warm water and stir. Let this mixture rest for about two minutes, until the liquid bubbles and foams slightly, an indication that the yeast is active. Add milk, butter (or other preferred fat), and egg. Stir. Incorporate 1 cup of sifted flour into the mixture and add salt. Continue adding flour until the mixture is stiff (3 to 4 cups). Cover with a towel and place dough in a warm, dry place to rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

Punch risen dough and knead for one minute, incorporating just enough extra flour to make sure the dough isn't too sticky to work with your hands. Pinch dough into 2-3 inch balls and place in a greased 9x13-inch baking pan. Allow rolls to rise until doubled again, about 1 hour. Bake in a 400°F oven for 11 minutes (or until golden).

Cara Tillman lives in Austin, Texas, where she's learning to be a teacher and working in a wine bar.

CHEESE BREAD

from

RAE HILL

This recipe comes from Chef Jeanne Kraus's breads class at the International Culinary School at the Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago, which, with Rae as liaison, donated their homework each week to Soup and Bread. Says Rae, "This is Chef Kraus's favorite recipe to teach and eat!" I can see why: These light, savory loaves, some of which were still warm, flew out of our bread baskets the week it was on the syllabus.

INGREDIENTS

MAKES 1 FULL OR 2 SMALL ROUNDS

- 3** $\frac{1}{2}$ cups bread flour
- $\frac{2}{3}$** cups water
- 2** tablespoons olive oil
- 1** teaspoon salt
- 1** teaspoon instant yeast
- $\frac{3}{4}$** cup + **1** tablespoon levain
- $\frac{1}{2}$** cup Parmesan cheese, $\frac{1}{4}$ grated, $\frac{1}{4}$ cubed

PREPARATION

Add all ingredients but cheese to the bowl of a standing mixer and mix on low for 3 minutes, adding water as necessary (dough will be a little stiff until cheese is added).

Mix another 3 minutes at medium speed to moderate gluten development.

Add cheese and mix until it is just incorporated.

Set aside in warm place to ferment until double in size.

Punch dough down and then shape into boules, then proof until doubled in size—or about an hour.

Place a pan of hot water on the lowest rack in your oven. Preheat oven to 425°F. Once you have placed the bread in the oven, quickly spritz the inside walls of the oven with water and shut the door fast to trap the steam. Bake 15-20 minutes. This creates the crisp crust on the bread. Then, lower temperature to 350°F to prevent overbrowning the cheese. Bake 20 to 30 minutes more, then cool at least 20 minutes before serving.

Rae Hill resides in Chicago, where she's living the dream with her husband Todd and working as a pastry chef.