

The background of the cover features a warm, glowing fire in a fireplace. In the foreground, a white bowl is filled with a creamy soup, topped with several pieces of bright red lobster. To the right, a bottle of wine is partially visible, and to the left, a piece of bread is seen. The overall atmosphere is cozy and inviting.

SUPERB MAINE SOUPS

Innovative Recipes
from Simple to Sumptuous

Cynthia Finnemore Simonds

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from Simple to Sumptuous

Cynthia Finnemore Simonds
Photographs by Randall Smith
Drawings by the Author

Down East Books

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This book is dedicated to the special men in my life who know how to lead. To my father, Fred Finnemore, who taught me to love jazz and showed me how to fox-trot as a little girl by standing on the tops of his feet. To my husband, Sherwood, who dances me into happiness every day. To our son, Travis Simonds, who is growing into a fine gentleman who can glide me across a dance floor. To Campbell Searle, a dance partner extraordinaire, to whom I will always respond "Yes!" when he asks me to dance. And to Todd Finnemore, the best brother in the world, who is just beginning his dance. Lead on!

Dreams defined are possible
In a life lived deliberately
—CFS

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INTRODUCTION

The fragrance of bubbling, warm soup can hypnotize the strongest among us to extend a bowl and pull up a chair to the table. These days of hurried meals and convenience foods have caught up to us. It's time to slow down, to appreciate once again the flavors that can come from our own kitchen in surprisingly little time.

You'll find ideas and recipes here that allow you to make a quick batch of hearty soup—or prepare a few ingredients in the morning before work, plug in your slow cooker, and come home to a delicious, healthful meal. With very little planning, you can enjoy additive- and preservative-free meals that are full of flavor and tempt even the tiniest tummies.

Find time. Sit back. Savor your food. Linger with your family, and enjoy what you have before you. It's time for a bowl of your favorite soup.

Thrifty, Frugal, Yankee

I grew up in a home where my mom always baked bread, roasted chickens, and made her own stock. Those were the times when it was expected that meals would be homemade. I can remember begging her at the grocery store to buy TV dinners. They were a novelty. How cool it seemed then to have all your food in one handy tray! These days the norm for most families is to purchase convenience foods. They pick up prepackaged potatoes, refrigerator biscuits, and frozen entrées. Why not take a moment to break this cycle?

I've learned through my frugal Yankee roots to freeze any leftover goodies that I can use to flavor my soups. My friend Robin is the best I know at organizing her leftovers. By labeling gallon-size ziplock plastic freezer bags, she keeps her onion ends, extra green beans, turkey bones, and squash peelings in the freezer, ready to use. Every day she casually tosses extra bits and pieces into the appropriate bag. When the veggie-peel bag gets full, it's time to make soup. If she needs to make stock, she simply takes out whichever bags she wants to use. The leftovers go into a pot of water, and her soup is started before she even has to go to her pantry. This is a great way to economize when making soups, because freezing leftovers lets us use up the extra bits that would otherwise get thrown away or composted. Adding mashed potato or winter squash, for example, will thicken the broth and enhance its flavor.

One of my favorite ways to start a soup is by using leftover chicken bones. Whenever we finish a roast chicken or turkey—whether it came from the market's rotisserie or was roasted in our oven—we freeze the bones with any meat still left on them. At soup making time, I just place them in a pot, cover them with water, and simmer for a couple of hours to extract all the flavorful goodness. I throw in herb stems that I've saved, vegetable peelings from the freezer, whole cloves of garlic, and voilà! My soup is well on its way to being full of flavor.

The best soups incorporate layers of flavor. It's important to have a balance of ingredients so one

doesn't dominate your dish. You want to taste the delicate herbs alongside the hearty meat or creamy cheeses. Sample as you go. It is the best way to keep the flavors balanced.

Soups are often meat based, but vegetables are a wonderful alternative. We have several prepared commercial options to achieve the flavors of chicken, beef, seafood, or vegetables. Powdered bouillon comes in packets, in jars, and pressed into cubes. These are viable options for flavoring soups. Broth also comes in cans or coated paper containers. Bouillon pastes often come in jars, and most should be refrigerated.

Read the labels before you purchase bouillon or broth. Decide for yourself and your family what combination of ingredients will best suit you. Some brands are very high in sodium, although many offer low-salt and fat-free versions as well. Others contain MSG or starch. Whichever brand you choose, make sure to adjust your recipe to accommodate the amount of salt in the prepackaged bouillon or broth.

Starting from Scratch

Don't let it scare you: Starting from scratch is an easy way to create your own masterpieces in the kitchen. Soup is best when you bring together the flavors your family loves.

My favorite way to begin a soup is by making stock. Once it has simmered and settled, you're left with a delicious base from which to build the flavors of your soup.

Many people ask about the difference in flavor between fresh and frozen vegetables. Whenever you have the opportunity to purchase locally grown ingredients from a farmer's market or your corner market, take it! Fresh veggies are always the best, although frozen vegetables take a close second in flavor. Most often they are frozen at their peak of freshness, so they are ready to become a part of your soup as soon as they're out of the bag. Frozen vegetables can be added right into your bubbling pot just before you're ready to serve. They will cook in the last few minutes and be bright and colorful as you dish up your soup.

Herbs and spices are another story. When did you last purchase dried herbs? Do you remember when you bought that can of ground black pepper that is at the back of your spice shelf? If you aren't sure you bought those herbs and spices within the last six months, out they go. Use fresh herbs whenever possible. Their flavor is brighter and more full-bodied. If you need to use dried herbs, purchase them in small quantities. Buying herbs and spices on the same day you pick up your vegetables will give your recipes an extra zing.

A wonderful thing about soups is that they can showcase the best local ingredients from one's home area. Here in Maine we have an active, enthusiastic farmer's market network (guides are available at the www.getrealgetmaine.com Web site). These open-air markets are the best places to find anything grown or produced locally, from fresh vegetables to wild mushrooms, specialty cheeses, condiments, and organic meats and eggs. The Maine Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Resources also publishes two helpful booklets: *Finding Maine Farmer's Markets: A Guide to Maine's Farmer's Markets* and *Finding Maine Foods and Farms: A Guide to Maine's Farms and Food Companies*.

Of course, Maine is famous for its lobster and other seafood. Aquaculture farms raise trout and salmon.

Local smokehouses produce golden smoked mussels, trout, cheeses, and other specialties. All of these are excellent additions to soups, and in the recipes that follow, I indulge in a little bit of local pride by specifying products from selected Maine producers. You can, of course, substitute equivalent ingredients, but I'd certainly encourage you to try the genuine Maine-made items first. On pages 102 and 103 you'll find information on how to order the specialty foods listed in my recipes.

Make These Recipes Your Own

One of my favorite things to do with cookbooks is to jot notes in them. When I make a recipe, I write in the date, whom I made it for or what occasion we celebrated, and what I did differently that time. I always smile as I turn the pages in my favorite cookbooks and am reminded of special times in years past.

I hope that you will use this book for yourself and for your family. Write in it. Make notes of what you like and how you changed things to fit your own taste. This is your book.

A Few Important Acknowledgments

I am so grateful to the people who have remained by my side through thick and thin. These are true friends, people who live on in my heart and my life.

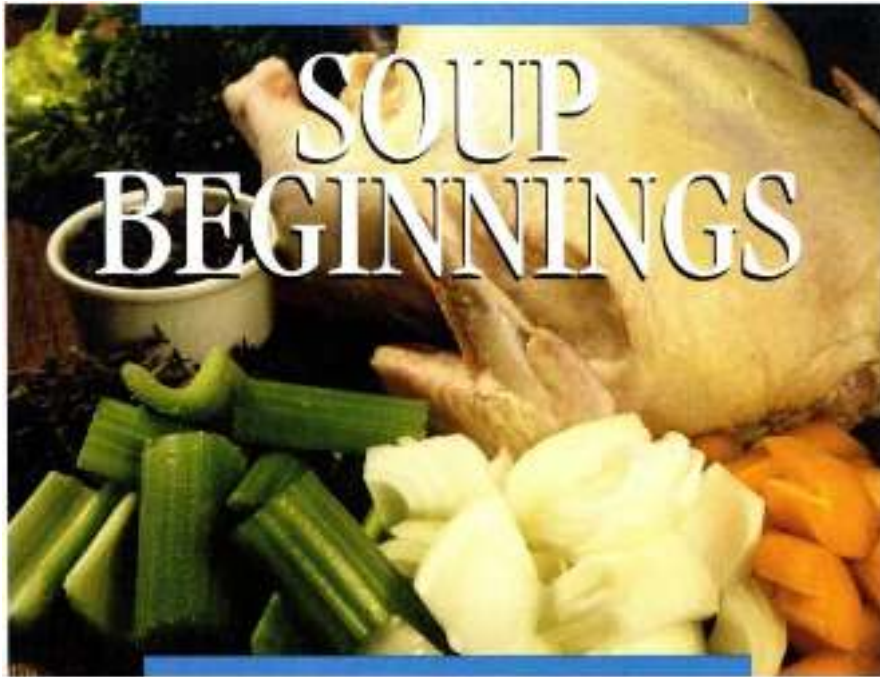
Thanks go to my mother, Nancy Finnemore, for teaching me how to roast the bird and save the bones; to my friend Robin Schmidt for her wisdom, friendship and veggie-crunchy-ideals; to my friend Myrna Paye for her encouragement and generosity of spirit, and to Oprah for her excellence and inspiration—I'm on my way!

I thank Elizabeth and Travis for their constant cheers of "Go for it, Mom!" and my husband, Sherwood Olin, for his devotion to all things that make me happy.

Thanks also go to Cam Searle, who is always willing to go out and explore new restaurants or stay in and try new recipes, and to Donna Jean Kaiser, Susan Mayer, Michele Nardo, Kim McClain, Dianne Leavitt, Paula Schuster, Anne Marie Sacco, Paula Schuster, Carla Frisbee, Allison Linsley, Adele Gale, Gayle Yost, Molly Oliver, and Karyn Shippee—time is nonexistent and joy ever constant when I am with such good friends.

And a special thank-you goes to my editor, Karin Womer. I embrace your direction, appreciate your patience, and welcome your kindness.

—CFS



When we pick the best local meats and produce, the freshest ingredients come together to become more than the sum of their parts. Begin with the best in your kitchen and see what wonders you can create.

Aromatics

The Veggie Trinity, often referred to as aromatics, is the first thing to go into any soup pot. Each culture has its own name for the combination. In France it is "mirepoix." Latino chefs refer to it as "sofrito." In Italy it is "soffritto."

This triad is the base for most soups and sauces and includes celery, carrot or green pepper, and onion. When these ingredients are sautéed and simmered, they combine to emit a luscious flavor and aroma that start our mouths watering.

Creating stock is much more of an art than a science. Knowing the starter ingredients makes the seemingly monumental task of making stock an easy exercise. The following recipes will give you an outline of what to use, but they are only suggestions. The amounts of each aromatic you use aren't precise.

Classically, a mirepoix is a mixture of 50 percent onion, 25 percent carrot, and 25 percent celery that enhances the flavor, aroma, and balance of stocks.

This combination of vegetables adds layers of flavor and depth to a stock. I frequently add garlic, mushrooms, and leeks. There should be approximately one pound of mirepoix or sofrito to one gallon of meat stock. If you're making vegetable stock, you should use four pounds of mirepoix or sofrito to one gallon of water, or one part vegetables to two parts of water.

Testing your stock is key. Sample it at different stages, adding herbs and other seasonings and more aromatics, if necessary. Another shortcut I often use is to make up a large batch of mirepoix or sofrito. I reserve the portion I need for the recipe I'm creating, then I

divide the balance of the mirepoix or sofrito into half-cup portions in ziplock plastic bags, which I label, date, and freeze for up to six months. Whenever I want to make soup, all I need to do is thaw a bag and I'm off and running.

Another option is to pour the cooled mixture into clean ice cube trays and freeze. When the mixture is frozen, remove the cubes from the trays and save them in the freezer in a ziplock plastic freezer bag. I can then use the cubes as needed as a flavoring or base for my soups, sauces, and stews.

Whenever you see onion, carrots or green bell pepper, and celery listed in the recipes that follow, feel free to use an equal quantity of your choice of mirepoix, white mirepoix, sofrito, or soffritto, depending on what flavors you desire.

Traditional Mirepoix

Here is a simple recipe for mirepoix, based on the classic proportions of 1 part carrots and 1 part celery to 2 parts onion.

Yield: about 8 cups

1 T butter
1 T olive oil
4 c onion, chopped
2 c carrots, peeled and chopped
2 c celery, chopped

Melt the butter with the olive oil in a large stock-pot. Add the vegetables and sauté over medium heat until the onion is translucent. Remove from the heat and refrigerate or freeze until you're ready to use it in soup.

White Mirepoix

A white stock is made by simmering bones, vegetables, and aromatics in water. The mirepoix for this stock remains almost colorless throughout the cooking process.

Yield: about 10 cups

1 T butter
1 T olive oil
2 c onion, chopped
2 c leeks, chopped
2 c celery, chopped
2 c parsnips, peeled and chopped
2 c very clean mushrooms or mushroom trimmings

Melt the butter with the olive oil in a large stock-pot. Add the vegetables and sauté until the onion is translucent.

Add to your meats and stock as your recipe instructs, or refrigerate or freeze to use later.

Spanish Sofrito

Sofrito is a traditional base for many Latino and Spanish dishes, but adds wonderful flavor and depth to almost any meal. Annatto oil is available at many grocery stores.

Yield: about 6 cups

2 T annatto or olive oil
 3 c finely chopped onion
 1 c finely chopped green bell pepper
 1 c finely chopped red bell pepper
 1 jalapeño, chopped
 5 cloves garlic, minced
 1 T tomato paste
 ½ c chopped cilantro
 ¼ t salt

¼ t black pepper
 1 lime, juice and zest

Heat the oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté 1 minute. Add the bell peppers, jalapeño, garlic, and tomato paste. Cook 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Stir in the remaining ingredients. Use in your favorite soup or sauce, or freeze for later use.

Italian Soffrito

Soffrito means under- or lightly fried. Dozens of Italian dishes use soffrito as a base, especially for soups, stews, and sauces.

Yield: about 8 cups

¼ c olive oil
 6 large onions, chopped
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 1 c chopped parsley
 3 T chopped basil
 1 c fresh (or dried and reconstituted) porcini mushrooms
 2 c peeled and crushed tomatoes, or 1 2-lb can, with liquid
 ¼ t nutmeg
 1 t salt
 freshly ground black pepper, to taste

If you are using dried mushrooms, soak them in 2 cups of warm water for approximately 30 minutes. Reserve the soaking liquid.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Stir in the onion and cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the garlic and cook until the onion is soft. Add the parsley and basil, and cook until the parsley loses its intense green color. Add the mushrooms; if you are using dried mushrooms, strain the mushroom soaking water and add ¼ cup of the liquid to the pan. Add the tomatoes, nutmeg, salt, and pepper, and simmer over low heat until the liquid reduces by a quarter, about 30 minutes. Use immediately or freeze.

Stocks

The liquid in many soups comes from water that has been seasoned with the essence of meats, seafood, or vegetables. Here are some suggestions for making your own stock. I use the words "stock" and "broth" interchangeably in the recipes that follow, although broth is usually from a can and stock refers to the homemade variety. Add the vegetables that you prefer to create a soup your family will love. If you'd like to use mirepoix (see page 13), substitute it for the same quantity of vegetables in the recipe. Stock can be refrigerated for up to four days or stored in the freezer for up to six months.

Chicken or Turkey Stock

Yield: 3 quarts

4 lb chicken or turkey bones, cut into pieces
 chicken or turkey giblets and neck, chopped
 3 qt plus 1 c cold water
 1 medium onion
 2 leeks, halved lengthwise and rinsed
 2 carrots
 2 stalks celery, halved
 2 t salt
 6 sprigs parsley
 6 sprigs fresh thyme
 3 cloves garlic
 3 bay leaves



In a kettle, combine the chicken or turkey bones, giblets, neck, and 3 quarts of cold water. Bring to a boil. Skim the foam from the top and discard.

Add another cup of cold water and bring to a boil again. Skim the foam from the top again and discard.

Add the onion, leeks, carrots, celery, salt, parsley, thyme, garlic, and bay leaves. Lower the heat and simmer the stock for 2 hours, continuing to skim and discard the foam as it forms.

Remove the chicken or turkey from the kettle. Let cool for 10 minutes or until it's cool enough to handle. Remove the meat and skin from the bones, and reserve the meat for later use.

Break apart the bones and return them with the skin to the kettle. Simmer the stock for 2 more hours, adding boiling water if necessary to keep the bones covered.

Strain the stock through a fine sieve into a bowl, pressing hard on the solids, and let it cool. Discard the solids and chill the stock. When the stock has cooled, remove the congealed fat on top with a slotted spoon.

Chicken Stock—Double-Day Doozie

This slow-cooked chicken stock has outstanding flavor. It's worth the extra day to prepare.

Yield: 3 quarts

Day One:

- 5 lb fresh chicken bones (necks, backs, wings)
- 5 qt cold water
- 2½ inches gingerroot, cut into ½-inch chunks
- 2 baby Vidalia onions or 2 bunches of scallions, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 c chopped celery
- 2 c chopped carrots
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 10 white peppercorns
- 10 red or pink peppercorns

Day Two:

- 3 qt chicken stock, from Day One
- 2 qt cold water
- 5 lb fresh chicken bones (necks, backs, wings)
- 2½ inches gingerroot, cut into ½-inch chunks
- 2 baby Vidalia onions or 2 bunches of scallions, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 c chopped celery
- 2 c chopped carrots
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 large red onion, thinly sliced
- 10 white peppercorns
- 10 red or pink peppercorns

Day One:

Rinse the chicken bones under cold running water. Place bones in a heavy 10-quart stockpot. Add the cold water and set the pot over high heat. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, or until there is a thick foam on the surface. Skim off and discard the foam.

Add the remaining ingredients for Day One and simmer on low for 4 hours, or until the liquid is reduced by half. Strain the finished stock through several layers of cheesecloth and discard the solids. Chill overnight.

Day Two:

Skim off the congealed fat from Day One's stock with a slotted spoon. Repeat the process from Day One, starting with Day One's stock and using the ingredients for Day Two.

Brown Chicken Stock

The light flavor of pear enhances this hearty stock. Winterport Winery Dry Pear white wine works well in this recipe (see appendix).

Yield: 2 quarts

5 lb chicken bones
10 c water, or enough to cover the chicken
by 2 inches
1 large onion, cut into 1-inch chunks
2 carrots, cut into 1-inch chunks
2 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch chunks
1 bay leaf
10 peppercorns
1 bunch parsley stems
1 c dry white wine

Preheat the oven to 450° F. Rinse the bones in cold water. Place them in a roasting pan and roast, stirring occasionally, until well browned all over.

Transfer the roasted bones to a stockpot. Cover with water and simmer for 30 minutes. Skim the foam off the top of the liquid carefully and discard.

While you are simmering the bones, place the vegetables in the same roasting pan used for the bones and roast them until they brown. Add the vegetables to the stockpot.

Place the hot roasting pan over medium heat on the stove top and pour in the wine.

Stir and scrape up all the browned bits stuck to the bottom and sides of the pan and pour everything into the stockpot. Add the bay leaf, peppercorns, and parsley. Continue to simmer on low, uncovered, for 4 hours.

Strain the stock through a fine sieve into a bowl, pressing hard on the solids, and let the stock cool. Discard the solids and chill the stock. When the stock has cooled, scrape off the congealed fat with a slotted spoon.

Note: If you want to clarify the stock, whisk 4 egg whites in a bowl and add them to the stock in your stockpot. Stir gently and constantly to prevent the whites from sticking to the bottom and sides of the pot. Bring the stock to a boil. The egg whites will rise to the top. Once they have risen, stop stirring.

The whites will solidify on the top of the liquid, forming a soft crust, and any impurities and fats will cling to it. Carefully skim the egg layer off the top and discard. The stock liquid will be transparent.

Hearty Beef Stock

This is a full-flavored stock for your favorite beef stew. I ask my butcher for his freshest and meatiest bones for my stock.

Yield: 4 quarts

4 lb beef bones
4 qt cold water
2 c chopped carrots
2 c chopped white onion
2 c chopped celery
2 leeks, washed well and chopped
6 garlic cloves, crushed
2 bay leaves
1 small bunch parsley
4 sprigs fresh thyme
1 sprig fresh rosemary
10 black peppercorns

Place the bones in a large stockpot and cover with the water. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer 10 minutes.

Skim the fat and foam from the surface and discard both. Add the remaining ingredients. Partially cover the pot, and allow the mixture to simmer for 3 hours. Add water if necessary during the cooking process to keep the bones covered.

Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and discard the solids. Cool and refrigerate.

White Veal Stock

This stock is an elegant beginning for beef stew, soups, and gravies.

Yield: 4 quarts

4 lb veal bones
4 qt cold water
2 c chopped carrots
1 c chopped white onion
1 c chopped celery
2 leeks, washed well and chopped
4 garlic cloves, crushed
1 bay leaf
1 small bunch parsley
4 sprigs fresh thyme

Place the bones in a large stockpot and cover with the water. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer. Skim the fat and foam from the surface and discard them. Add the remaining ingredients. Partially cover the pot and allow the mixture to simmer for 3 hours. Add water if necessary during the cooking process to keep the bones covered. Strain through a fine mesh sieve and discard the solids. Cool and refrigerate.

Two Seafood Stocks

After a lobster feed, in true Maine tradition, we use all the lobster shells and bodies to make a delicious stock. Winterport Winery's Dry Pear white wine is excellent in a lobster or shrimp stock. Fish stock enhances the flavor of chowders and bouillabaisse.

Lobster or Shrimp Stock

Yield: 2 quarts

5 lb Maine lobster shells and/or bodies or
Maine shrimp heads and shells
10 c water
1 c coarsely chopped carrots
1 c coarsely chopped celery
1 c peeled and coarsely chopped leeks
2 bay leaves
5 sprigs parsley
10 peppercorns
1 c dry white wine

Place all the ingredients in a large, heavy stockpot and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for 30 minutes.

Remove the stock from the heat; strain the mixture through a fine mesh strainer and discard the solids.

Return the liquid to the stove top and simmer over moderate heat until it is reduced to about 2 quarts.

Fish Stock

Yield: 4 quarts

6 lb fish bones, heads, fins, or fillets
2 T olive oil
1 c chopped onion
1 c sliced leek, white part only
1 c chopped celery
1 c chopped carrot
1 c chopped cremini mushrooms
2 c white wine (optional)
1 bay leaf
3 sprigs sage
3 sprigs thyme
3 sprigs parsley
1 t freshly ground white pepper
4 qt cold water

Rinse fish parts under running water for at least 5 minutes. Drain them in a colander. If you are using the heads, remove the eyes.

Heat oil in a large saucepan and cook vegetables on low for 6 minutes. Add fish parts and cook for 5 minutes. Pour in the wine, cook for 5 minutes, and add remaining ingredients. Cover vegetables and fish completely with water, adding more if necessary. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Skim as necessary to remove foam. Remove stock from heat and let it stand for 30 minutes. Skim once more. Strain stock through a fine-mesh strainer and discard solids. Refrigerate stock overnight.

Remove the fat layer on top and discard. Absorb remaining fat with a paper towel.

Slow-Cooker Vegetable Stock

When creating a flavorful veggie stock, I've found it best to use at least one part vegetables to two parts liquid. That means if you are using 12 cups of water, you need a good 6 cups of vegetables to flavor the liquid. This recipe uses an even richer one-to-one ratio for maximum flavor in a slow cooker.

Yield: 6 cups

2 c chopped onion
1 c chopped carrots
1 c chopped celery
1 c chopped parsnip
1 c chopped button mushrooms
3 cloves garlic, sliced in half
3 bay leaves

2 sprigs thyme
6 c cold water

Combine all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cook over low heat for 6 to 8 hours. Strain and discard the solids.

10 Vegetables

Veggies are the champions of our culinary world. They make every savory soup taste better. My Top Ten vegetables for soups and stews are:

1. Onion
2. Carrot
3. Celery
4. Leek
5. Squash
6. Parsnip
7. Potato, both white and sweet
8. Mushrooms
9. Peas
10. Beans

Vegan "Chicken" Stock

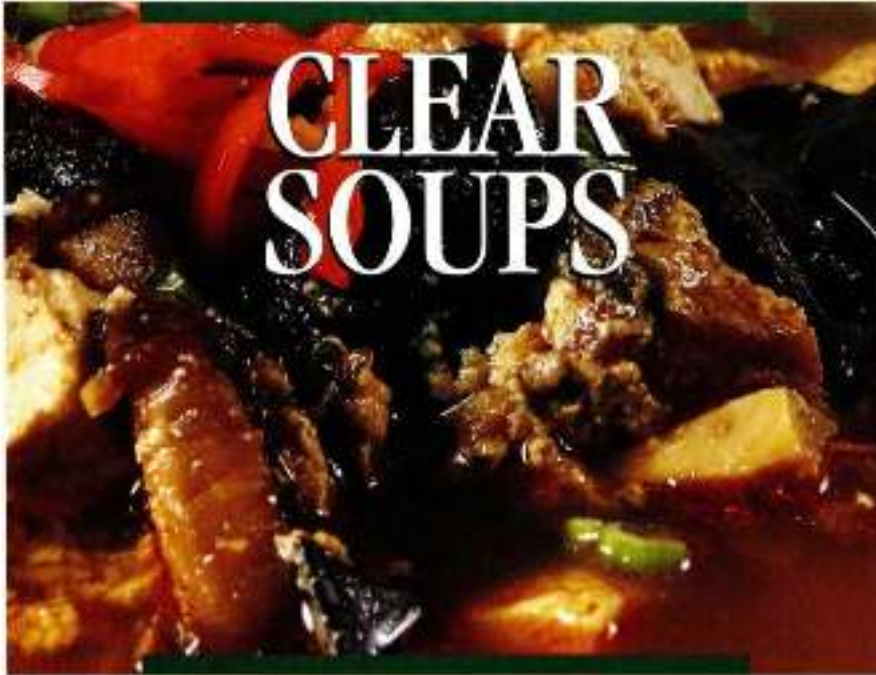
Here is another tasty adaptation for vegetarians. Unlike most stocks, it is cooked for only a brief time.

Yield: 1 quart

1 c chopped carrots
1 c chopped celery
1 c chopped shiitake mushrooms
4 c water
2 bay leaves
½ t celery seeds
1 t rubbed sage
½ t salt
3 sprigs parsley
3 T nutritional yeast

Combine all ingredients in a large stockpot. Bring to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes.

Strain the stock through a fine-mesh sieve. Pick out the vegetables from the herbs and save them for soup or casseroles, as they have not been cooked to death. Discard the herbs.



Simple, clear broths can contain a myriad of complex flavors. Embrace your inner culinary artist and try your hand at one of these delicious clear soups. Their beauty lies in their simplicity.

Maine French Onion Soup with Canadian Bacon

French onion soup is wonderful topped with slivers of Canadian bacon, shredded cheese, and artisanal bread. When you use crusty slices of Borealis Bread and State of Maine Cheese Company's Saint Croix Black Pepper Jack cheese (see appendix), you've got a doubly delicious combination.

Serves 6

3 T butter
1 T olive oil
6 medium onions, sliced in half then thinly sliced
2 T fresh minced garlic
3 T Maine maple syrup
1 c marsala wine
½ t freshly ground white pepper
3 c chicken stock
3 c canned beef broth
1 T chicken bouillon paste or powder
1 T beef bouillon paste or powder
12 slices Canadian bacon, cut into slivers
or chopped
8 slices artisanal bread, toasted
1 c grated Gruyère cheese (or more)
½ c grated Parmesan (or more)
½ c grated black pepper Jack cheese (or more)

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the oil, onion, garlic, and maple syrup. Cook, stirring often, for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the onion is caramel brown.

Deglaze the pan: Add the marsala and scrape up all the tasty brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Add the pepper, stock, broth, and chicken and beef bouillon. Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes.

Preheat the broiler. Taste and adjust seasonings. Ladle soup into oven-proof bowls. Top each bowl with a layer of Canadian bacon, a slice of toast, and the grated cheeses. Broil until the cheeses melt and bubble.



Quick Chicken Noodle Soup

Always a crowd pleaser, this soup has been my daughter Elizabeth's favorite since she was a baby.
Serves 4 to 6

1 T butter
½ c chopped onion
½ c chopped celery
1 c sliced carrots
6 c chicken broth
2 c chopped cooked chicken breast
1 T chicken bouillon paste or powder
1½ c egg noodles or alphabet pasta
salt and pepper, to taste
1 T chopped fresh parsley

In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook the onion, celery, and carrots in the butter until they are fork-tender, about 5 minutes. Pour in the chicken broth and stir in the chicken, bouillon, and noodles. Add salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes.

Adjust the seasonings and serve sprinkled with fresh parsley.

Beef Vegetable Soup

So easy and so good. Add any other fresh herbs you like to vary the flavor.
Serves 6

1½ lb ground sirloin
6 c beef broth
3 T minced garlic
1 c diced white onion
2 c sliced carrots
2 c diced celery
2 c sliced Maine potatoes
1 c cut green beans, drained if canned
2 c corn, drained if canned
2 c tomato sauce
1 c diced tomatoes, drained if canned
1 t ground mustard
½ t freshly ground white pepper

Maine sea salt, to taste
red pepper flakes, to taste

In a large saucepan, brown the ground sirloin and break it into small pieces. Remove the meat with a slotted spoon and drain it on a paper-towel-lined plate. Reserve 1 tablespoon of the fat in the pan and discard the rest. Add all of the remaining ingredients to the pan. Stir to combine and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat and return the beef to the soup. Cover and simmer 2 hours. Add additional beef broth if you wish to thin the soup.

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