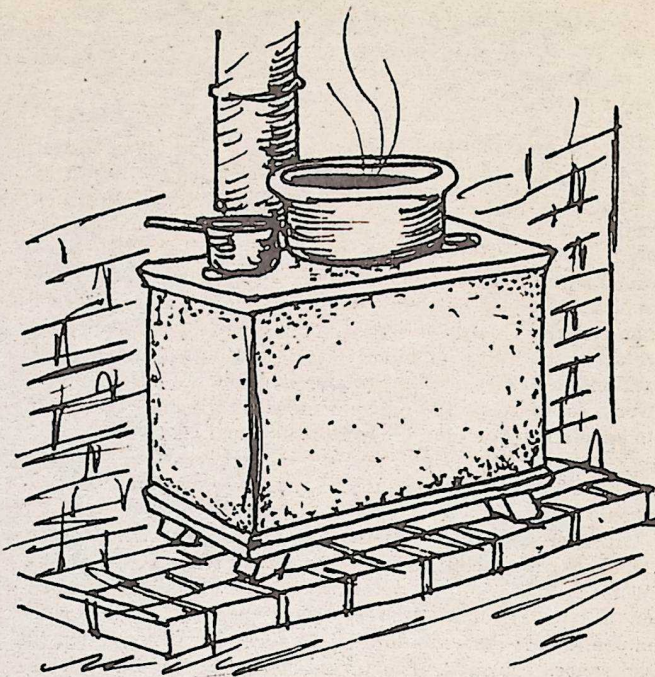


Woodstove cookery

From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

by Lydia Lovell



A toasty kitchen, warmed by a black cast-iron stove gleaming with chrome trim and burning coal, was one of winter's most redeeming features when I was a child. Such a stove practically invites people to draw up close when the temperature outside drops below the freezing point. Such a stove radiates welcome and good cheer. Such a stove urges all those within reach of its shimmering heat to make every possible use of its output. Not only does such a stove help warm the house, but it cooks marvelously well into the bargain. Such a stove dominated Aunt Olivia's kitchen.

No such stoves grace modern kitchens... instead electric or gas ranges are supplemented by microwave ovens... yet many homes today boast small stoves in living or family rooms because burning wood or coal helps keep fuel bills within reason and, although few are equipped with ovens, ovens are available to use on top of stoves, and cooking on a woodstove is a little different from cooking on a top burner.

Aunt Olivia's files include many recipes that adapt perfectly to woodstove cookery, recipes ideal for cold-weather meals. Let's consider soups; a hearty soup can make a meal all by itself, or a lighter soup, together with a generous sandwich, yields a satisfying lunch.

Good soups commence with stock, and no better has yet been devised than **Homemade Chicken Broth** as Aunt Olivia prepared it.

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| 1 frying chicken, 2-3 lbs. | 1/2 t. pepper |
| 1 quart water | 1/2 t. marjoram |
| 1 medium onion, chopped | 2 t. Angostura Bitters |

Cut chicken into pieces and combine with other ingredients in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Over high heat, bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to simmer; cook one hour. Remove chicken pieces from broth and use meat for salads, sandwiches, or serve with gravy in pattysheils. The broth is your soup stock. It will keep two to three days in the refrigerator but for longer storage must be frozen. Cool broth and remove solid fat from surface before using or prior to freezing.

To make a light soup appropriate to serve with sliced chicken or chicken salad sandwiches, prepare **Celery Rice Soup**.

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| 1 C. celery, diced | 2 T. chicken fat |
| 1/2 C. raw rice | 1 T. chopped parsley |
| 4 C. chicken broth (divided) | 2 C. milk |

In a medium saucepan, cook celery, rice, and chicken fat in 2 cups of chicken broth until rice is tender. Pour through a sieve, reserving liquids and forcing rice and celery through the strainer with a wooden spoon. Add resulting pulp and liquids to remaining 2 cups of broth, the milk, and the chopped parsley. Reheat over low fire; do not allow to boil. Serves six.

Somewhat heartier, **Cream of Broccoli Soup** will serve eight if accompanied by a sandwich, or will make a meal for four.

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| 2 pkg. frozen chopped broccoli | 6 T. flour |
| 1/4 C. boiling water | 4 C. chicken broth |
| 3 T. chicken fat | 2 C. milk |
| 1 medium onion, chopped | 2 C. chicken meat, in 1" dice |

Thaw broccoli in 1/4 C. boiling water. In a large saucepan, melt chicken fat. Saute onion until golden. Remove pan from stove and blend in flour. Gradually stir chicken broth into flour mixture until smooth, return to heat, stirring until mixture thickens slightly. Add chopped broccoli, cover, and simmer 10 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool. In an electric blender, blend half of mixture at a time until smooth. Pour blended mixture back into saucepan. Add milk and chicken meat. Reheat slowly, stirring occasionally; do not boil.

Perhaps you find yourself without a supply of chicken stock, without a frying chicken in the freezer, and housebound by Old Man Winter. Plan ahead. Keep on hand a few one-pound packages of different sorts of dried beans. Made into soup, a pound of beans will satisfy appetites of six hungry people. You will need 24 hours of preparation time, though, if **Black Bean Soup** is to be on the menu.

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| 2 C. black beans |
| 8 C. cold water |
| 2 C. chopped onions |
| 1/2 C. chopped celery |
| 1/2 C. chopped carrots |
| 1 t. salt |
| 1/2 t. pepper |

- Garnishes: chopped cucumber
sliced hard-boiled eggs
minced onions
diced green pepper
sliced lemon, diced tomato
toasted croutons
crisp bacon crumbles

Wash and pick over beans; put in large saucepan with water. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Boil, uncovered, 5 minutes. Turn off heat, cover, and allow to cool on burner for one hour. (If cooking on a woodstove, remove pan from stove.) While beans cool, chop onions, celery, and carrots. At the end of the cooling hour, add chopped vegetables, salt, and pepper to beans. Return to heat and bring to boil. Simmer with cover tilted for 2-1/2 hours, stirring occasionally to make sure beans do not stick to bottom of pan. Put liquid and solids through a strainer, forcing solids through with a wooden spoon. Return

all to saucepan, cover, and set aside overnight in a cool place.

Next morning, bring soup to a simmer. Adjust seasonings if necessary. Add a little water if soup is too thick. Prepare garnishes to pass in separate small bowls. That's a square meal.

Almost any soup, Aunt Olivia taught me, improves in flavor if allowed to stand overnight. Because Uncle Henry welcomed soup any time but especially savored it warmed-up the second day, Aunt Olivia often made twice as much as she'd need for one meal so she would have enough left to serve a second time later in the week. And the same was true of **Baked Beans**. While Aunt Olivia always baked beans in her cast-iron kitchen stove's oven, I've discovered I can achieve results equally as excellent using a heavy Dutch oven on top of my woodstove.

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| 1 lb. beans | 1 clove garlic |
| 5 C. water | 1/2 t. powdered ginger |
| 1/4 C. molasses | 3 peppercorns |
| 1 t. salt | 2 T. prepared mustard |
| 1/2 t. thyme | 1 peeled onion |
| 1 bay leaf | 1/4 lb. salt pork or bacon |

Wash and pick over a pound of beans. You can use navy beans, pea beans, white or black-eyed beans, red kidney or black beans. Place beans in the bottom of a Dutch oven and add water. Stir in molasses and seasonings. Pierce the garlic clove with a toothpick so you can find it when beans have finished cooking. Tuck the onion and salt pork into the top. If you use bacon, roll up four to six slices and tie them together. Cover the pan and set on top of your woodstove.

Bring to a boil, then move to the coolest part of the stove (or put a rack under the pan) so the beans simmer very, very slowly. Let them cook 14 to 16 hours. If you put them on after the supper dishes are done and let them cook all night, they'll be ready to eat by noon the next day. Stir before you turn in for the night; add a little water if it looks as though a good deal has boiled away; check the fire as you usually do. In the morning, stir the beans again and add water if they seem to need more. Before noon, the beans should have become a dark reddish brown. Taste them and adjust seasonings if necessary. Remove and discard the salt pork or bacon, the bay leaf, and the toothpick with garlic, if you can find them. If not, watch for them as you serve the beans. Keep beans warm until serving time or, if you won't use them until suppertime, cool and reheat slowly.

You don't absolutely positively have to have a woodstove or even a stove-top oven to make baked beans, of course. You can use a slow-cooker exactly as I use the top of my woodstove. Or you can set your modern oven at 250° and bake your beans overnight in an old-fashioned bean pot. The secret (which is no secret at all) is long, slow cooking-time to permit the beans to soak up and blend their own goodness with all the other flavors.

Weathermen, this year, predict a warmer-than-usual winter for Cape Cod. If they are right, you may not become snowbound and may have no need for emergency stores. On the other hand, you might decide that hot, rich soups are just the ticket for wintertime lunches, and a steaming bowlful of baked beans could hit the spot on a chilly Saturday night. Doesn't it sound GOOD?