

From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

Soups from Scratch

by Lydia Lovell

From "soup to nuts" is an expression often used to indicate that nothing between beginning and end has been omitted. Most of us have heard the phrase all our lives without thinking about its real meaning which, of course, refers to a formal meal with several courses, starting with soup and continuing through appetizer, entree, salad, dessert and coffee, to nuts. When I was growing up, large meals were commonplace. Today, probably because we are aware that keeping our weight under control is beneficial to our health, we eat smaller, more simple meals. A lunch consisting of a cup of hearty soup followed by half-a-sandwich and a dish of fruit satisfies us.

In her own day, Aunt Olivia served soup frequently. Sometimes she prepared enough so that each of us had two or three bowls full. Followed by dessert, the entire meal was nothing more than soup accompanied by crackers or toast. There were also milk-based chowders: corn, clam, fish, and quahog; and there were such delights as lobster bisque and oyster stew. Soups were based upon meat or chicken stock to which vegetables and rice, noodles, or potatoes were added. For variety, there were creamed soups that featured a single vegetable; in these, chicken stock formed the base.

The soup I liked best, as a child, was **Mushroom Soup From Scratch**. It still tastes so superior to canned varieties that I make it whenever I find a bargain in fresh mushrooms.

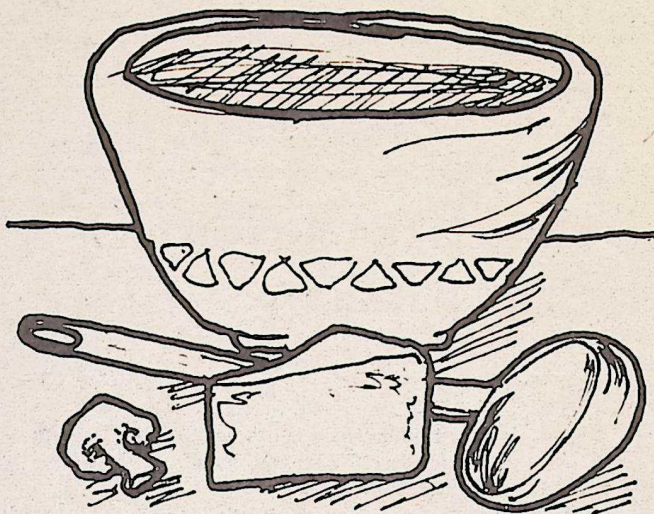
1 lb. fresh mushrooms, cleaned	salt and pepper to taste
1 qt. homemade chicken stock, fat-free	Pinch of ground ginger
2 T. margarine	1/4 C. dry sherry
2 T. flour	1/2 C. canned evaporated milk
	Paprika

Wipe mushrooms with paper towels; trim base of stems if necessary. Remove stems from caps and chop stems coarsely. In a large saucepan, bring stock to a simmer; stir in chopped stems. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Slice caps thinly. In a large skillet, melt margarine and saute caps for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. Combine flour, salt, pepper, and ginger; stirring with a wire whisk, add flour mixture to skillet. Gradually add 1-1/2 C. hot stock from saucepan. Return to heat and cook, whisking, until mixture boils. Pour contents of skillet into stock in saucepan. Return pot to heat; cook, whisking, until smooth and simmering. Reduce heat to warm. Stir in wine and milk. Do not allow to boil but keep warm until ready to serve. Garnish with paprika. Makes 4 to 6 bowls.

Doesn't that sound marvelous for lunch on a chilly, windy, snowy, March day? Or, perhaps you would like a big bowl of **Zucchini Cream Soup**, rich enough to make a complete lunch. Serve only a cup if the soup will be followed by grilled bacon and cheese sandwiches.

2 T. onion, finely chopped	1/4 t. salt
2 T. margarine	1/8 t. pepper
2 C. chicken stock	2-1/2 lbs. zucchini, coarsely chopped
1 t. curry powder	
1 8-oz. carton sour cream	

In a large saucepan, saute onion in butter until tender, about five minutes. Add chicken broth. Combine curry powder, salt, and pepper, and stir into broth; bring to a boil. Add chopped zucchini. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes until



zucchini is tender. Remove from heat and stir in sour cream. Pour a third of the soup into your blender jar and blend two minutes until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl or saucepan. Repeat, blending rest of soup.

Zucchini Cream Soup may be served either hot or cold. For hot soup, reheat, but do not allow to boil. Garnish with snipped parsley or chopped chives. For cold soup, cover and chill thoroughly before serving. Garnish with thin-sliced cucumber or chives. This recipe makes enough for four bowls full.

Certain good soups and chowders may be prepared quickly; others require longer preparation times as well as some "fiddlin'," but the results are worth extra effort. Some cooks enjoy experimenting with new recipes, adding to their repertoires, building variety into the meals they prepare. Any remarkable successes, of course, are repeated, rehearsed, and fine-tuned. The family members soon grow to expect that approved new dishes will reappear regularly. That's how meatball soup came to be served frequently at our table. Uncle Henry is most responsible, for it was he who commented the very first time Aunt Olivia fixed it, "Livy, let's have **Meatball Soup** again soon. It's delicious."

1/4 lb. ground lamb	1/3 C. flour
1/4 lb. ground pork	2 T. margarine
1/2 clove garlic, crushed	3 C. fat-free beef stock
1/2 t. salt	1/4 C. dry bread crumbs
1/4 t. pepper	1 T. canned tomato sauce
1/2 t. nutmeg (optional)	(or ketchup)
1/2 t. poultry seasoning	1 t. chopped celery leaves
1 T. chopped fresh parsley	

In a medium bowl, mix together thoroughly the ground meats and spices and seasonings. Sift flour onto wax paper; roll meatballs, formed from about a teaspoon of meat mixture rolled between palms, in flour; set aside until all meatballs are made and floured. Melt margarine in bottom of a large, heavy saucepan or in your slow-cooker. Brown meatballs, turning to brown evenly. Combine remaining ingredients and stir into pot. Simmer, covered, for about 40 minutes. Reduce heat and keep warm until ready to serve to four hungry people.

Whenever she made Meatball Soup, Aunt Olivia prepared **Cheese Toast**. This has become so popular with the Lovell family, we often make it when we have bean soups, cold soups, or even tuna or shrimp salads. This recipe makes plenty for four people. It may be halved if a hearty second course will follow the soup.

2/3 C. grated sharp cheese	8 slices 1/4"-thick bread, quartered diagonally
2 egg whites, stiffly beaten	
Paprika	

Fold cheese into beaten egg whites; spread on bread slices. Arrange bread in single layer on baking sheet and sprinkle with paprika. Bake quickly in 400° oven, watching to be sure cheese doesn't burn. Serve hot.

Speaking of bean soup, all of us enjoy beans however they are prepared, but Uncle Henry's second-favorite Saturday-night-supper was bean soup with cheese toast. (His first choice was baked beans and brown bread, of course.) Here's Aunt Olivia's **Navy Bean Soup** recipe:

1-1/2 C. dried navy beans	5 C. water
1 ham bone	1 t. salt
3 cloves garlic, minced	1/2 t. pepper
4 C. water	2 large onions, sliced
3 large potatoes, peeled and cubed	
1 10-oz. pkg. frozen turnip greens, thawed	

Pick over beans into a sieve; run them under cold water to remove dust. Turn into a large saucepan. Fill pan with water. Cover and soak beans overnight. Pour beans into sieve and drain well. In a Dutch oven, place ham bone, garlic, beans, and 4 C. cold water. Cover pan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer for three hours, stirring occasionally. Add remaining ingredients 20 minutes before serving. Replace cover and simmer until done. Yields 2-1/2 quarts.

As good as bean soup is, **Potato Soup** is better. At least, I prefer it. We made ours this way at Aunt Olivia's:

5 medium potatoes, peeled and diced	
1 small onion, thinly sliced	
1 large stalk celery, finely chopped	
2 t. celery salt	2 chicken-flavored bouillon cubes
1 t. seasoned salt	4 C. water
1 t. dried basil	2 T. flour
1/4 t. pepper	1-1/2 C. milk
2 T. dried parsley flakes	

In a large Dutch oven, combine all ingredients except flour and milk. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce heat. Simmer 20 minutes until potatoes are tender. Stir flour into milk; gradually stir milk into potato mixture. Simmer, uncovered, 15 minutes. Yield: 2 quarts.

Not only does potato soup stand on its own, but when you combine any that is left over with a can of kernel corn or with flakes of steamed fish... haddock, cod, or flounder... you have instantly created a fine corn or fish chowder. Try it; you'll be glad.

Then you'll bake slices of cheese toast and call everyone to the table with "Soup's on!". Just be sure to make enough so everyone can have second helpings. That's it for soups; we'll talk about nuts another day.