

It May Sound Trite, but Soup Really is Good Food

By John Rizzo

Nothing is more satisfying than a steaming bowl of soup in the middle of a blistering cold day of winter. Of course, as the popularity of air conditioning grew, soup is no longer limited to the winter months. Although often served as the first course of a meal, a big hearty bowl of hot soup served with crusty bread can be a wholesome meal in itself.

The art of making good soup can be mastered relatively easily if you stick with quality ingredients and good technique. Listed below are some basic tips to live by when preparing most soups.

1. Always sauté your mirepoix (usually diced onions, celery, carrots) before adding them to your broth.
2. Use bacon fat to sauté your mirepoix for bean, cabbage and potato soups.
3. For Bean soups, season with bay leaves and little thyme.
4. Use filtered water as opposed to water from the tap.
5. Add your salt last. As soup cooks and reduces, the salt becomes more concentrated.
6. If you're using beef, always brown it first. Let the liquid purge from the meat and continue to cook it until it crackles, browns, and leaves drippings on the bottom of your pot. When the liquid is added, it will deglaze the bottom of the pan and add additional flavor and color to your broth.
7. When making cream soups, make certain you scald your dairy product before adding it to hot soup and never bring a cream based soup to a boil; for it will curdle.
8. Any soup containing tomato product may become tart and require sugar to take the edge off; keeping in mind that carrots will help this process as well.
9. When making bean soups, add the tomatoes after the beans are fully cooked. Tomatoes can slow down the cooking process of the beans.

Stuffed Pepper Soup

Yield: 2 quarts

Ground Beef	1 lb	Beef Stock	1 1/4 Cup
Green Peppers, Diced	1 Cup	Brown Sugar	2 TBL
Diced Onion	1/3 Cup	Cooked Rice	1 1/4 Cup
Minced Garlic	1/2 tsp	Black Pepper	1/2 tsp
Ground Tomatoes	2 1/2 Cups	Salt to taste	
Diced Tomatoes	1 1/4 Cup		

Place a couple drops of water in the bottom of your soup pot and place over high heat. When the pot is hot enough to evaporate the water, add your ground beef. Cook beef over high heat while breaking it up with a hard spatula. Continue to brown the meat until its cooked thoroughly. Strain the fat from the beef and add the onions, peppers and garlic. Cook over medium heat until the vegetables are soft.

Add the ground and diced tomatoes, beef stock, brown sugar and black pepper. Cook on low heat for an additional 40 minutes. Add the cooked rice and salt to taste. Bring back to a boil and turn off heat.