

It's a Traditional Italian Wedding... But will they Serve Soup?

by John Rizzo

If you're interested in knowing when soup originated, you more than likely need to look at the history of cooking itself or at least when a container became available to cook in. Soups were as effortless as combining a variety of ingredients to create a simple, yet filling meal. Because soups are easily digested, they were always considered a food for the weak and ill often prescribed by physicians in early times.

Enter wedding soup. It is quite often thought of as a soup that was given its name because it was traditionally served at Italian weddings. Well, it turns out that this is just another culinary misnomer. In all reality, the name of this soup has absolutely nothing to do with marriage or wedding cuisine whatsoever. The Italian name for this soup is *Minestra Maritata*; English translation: married soup. The only marriage here is the beautiful union of vegetables and meat.

Like most foods, depending upon the chef, wedding soup can greatly vary in texture and ingredients. It doesn't make any of them right or wrong; it's all in your personal preference. With that said, there are key ingredients that really need to be included, such as meatballs, pasta, and greens. In addition to the below recipe, some chefs like to add egg, chicken, cheese, garlic, fennel, zucchini and a variety of other vegetables. Whether you eat this as a starter or as your main course, wedding soup is a marriage of nutritious ingredients that compliment one another.

Wedding Soup

Yield: 5 Quarts

Meatballs

Onion, minced	1/4 Cup	Chopped Parsley	2 tsp.
Garlic, Minced	1 tsp.	Grated Parmesan	1/2 Cup
Egg, Whipped	1 Each	Ground Beef	1/2 Lb.
Bread Crumbs	1/2 Cup	Ground Pork	1/2 Lb.
Oregano	1 tsp.	Salt and Pepper to taste	

In a large mixing bowl, combine the onion, garlic, egg, bread crumbs, oregano, parsley, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper; mix well.

Add the beef and pork and mix until well combined. Form meatballs to desired size (approximately, 1/2 inch in diameter) and place on a sheet pan. Bake at 400° F. until they lightly brown and become somewhat firm. Place in a colander and rinse any grease from the meatballs and set aside.

Soup

Olive Oil	1/4 Cup	Chicken Stock	1 Gallon
Onion, Diced	1 Cup	Endive or Escarole	1 Head
Celery, Diced	1 Cup	Pasta*, Raw	1 Cup
Carrots, Diced	1 Cup		

**Pasta: small varieties work best -such as pastina, ditalini, orzo*

Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot and add the onions, celery and carrots, sweat the vegetables until soft and add the chicken stock. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and let simmer for about an hour.

Meanwhile cook the pasta until soft and cool down under cold running water. Wrap tightly and refrigerate. I like to add the pasta to a bowl

before adding the soup. If you add it to the pot of soup it tends to absorb too much of the broth.

Cut off the root end of the endive or escarole and wash and drain well. Dice the greens, including the harder white stems, into very small pieces –approximately 1/4 inch and set aside.

Add the meatballs to the soup and cook for 15 minutes, skimming any fat and foam that floats on top. Add the greens and cook for an additional 10 minutes. Adjust seasonings, add a few spoonful's of pasta to your bowl and top with boiling hot soup.

