

COOK'S
ILLUSTRATED

all
time
best

soups





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soups from around the world



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classic chicken noodle soup

why this recipe works This classic rendition of chicken soup starts the old-fashioned way, by making a from-scratch broth. But instead of using a whole chicken we turned to meaty chicken thighs, which kept things easier; they also added intense, meaty flavor to the broth. To cut down on greasiness, we removed the skin after browning and before letting the thighs simmer along with the chopped and sautéed onion and bay leaves. Since most people prefer white meat in their chicken soup, we simply poached two boneless, skinless chicken breasts in the simmering broth, removing them when tender to add to the soup at the end. With the broth and the meat taken care of, we turned our attention to the soup with an eye towards keeping things simple and traditional. Onion, carrot, and celery and some fresh thyme fit the bill. As for the noodles, cooking them right in the broth intensified their flavor. Note that the thighs are used to flavor the broth, but once the broth is strained, the meat can be shredded and used for chicken salad or a pot pie. If you prefer dark meat meat in your soup, you can omit the chicken breasts and add the shredded thigh meat to the soup instead.

serves 8 to 10

broth
12 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 4 pounds)

Salt and pepper

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 medium onion, chopped

3 quarts water

2 bay leaves

2 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 pound)

soup
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 medium onion, chopped fine

1 carrot, sliced thin

1 rib celery, halved lengthwise, then sliced thin

2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme leaves

6 ounces wide egg noodles

¼ cup minced fresh parsley leaves

Salt and pepper

1. for the broth Pat thighs dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until smoking. Cook half of thighs skin side down until deep golden brown, about 6 minutes. Turn thighs and lightly brown second side, about 2 minutes. Transfer to strainer-lined large bowl. Repeat with remaining thighs and transfer to strainer; discard fat in bowl. Pour off fat from pot, add onion, and cook over medium heat until just softened, about 3 minutes. Meanwhile, remove and discard skin from thighs. Add thighs, water, bay leaves, and 1 tablespoon salt to pot. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Add chicken breasts and continue simmering until broth is rich and flavorful, about 15 minutes.

2. Strain broth into large container, let stand at least 10 minutes, then remove fat from surface. Meanwhile, transfer chicken to cutting board to cool. Once cooled, remove thigh meat from bones,

shred, and reserve for another use (can refrigerate for up to 2 days or freeze for up to 1 month). Shred breast meat and reserve for soup.

3. for the soup Heat oil in now-empty Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add onion, carrot, and celery and cook until onion has softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in thyme and broth and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes. Add noodles and shredded breast meat and simmer until noodles are just tender, about 5 minutes. Off heat, stir in parsley and season with salt and pepper. Serve.

to make ahead

The broth (and shredded breast meat) for this soup can be refrigerated for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 1 month before being used to make soup. To avoid soggy noodles and vegetables, finish the soup (step 3 in the recipe) just before you plan on serving it.

super greens soup with lemon-tarragon cream

why this recipe works This deceptively delicious, silky-smooth soup delivers a big dose of healthy greens and boasts a deep, complex flavor brightened with a garnish of lemon and herb cream. First, we built a flavorful foundation of sweet caramelized onions and earthy sautéed mushrooms. We added broth, water, and lots of leafy greens (we liked a mix of chard, kale, arugula, and parsley), and simmered the greens until tender before blending them until smooth. We were happy with the soup's depth of flavor, but it was watery and too thin. Many recipes we found used potatoes as a thickener, but they lent an overwhelmingly earthy flavor. Instead, we tried using Arborio rice. The rice's high starch content thickened the soup to a velvety, lush consistency without clouding the vegetables' bright flavors. For a vibrant finish, we whisked together heavy cream, sour cream, lemon zest, lemon juice, and tarragon and drizzled it over the top.

serves 4 to 6

¼ cup heavy cream

3 tablespoons sour cream

2 tablespoons plus ½ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

¼ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest plus ½ teaspoon juice

½ teaspoon minced fresh tarragon

Salt and pepper

1 onion, halved through root end and sliced thin

¾ teaspoon light brown sugar

3 ounces white mushrooms, trimmed and sliced thin

2 garlic cloves, minced

Pinch cayenne pepper

3 cups water

3 cups vegetable broth

⅓ cup Arborio rice

12 ounces Swiss chard, stemmed and chopped coarse

9 ounces kale, stemmed and chopped coarse

¼ cup fresh parsley leaves

2 ounces (2 cups) baby arugula

1. Combine cream, sour cream, ½ teaspoon oil, lemon zest and juice, tarragon, and ¼ teaspoon salt in bowl. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

2. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Stir in onion, sugar, and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion releases some moisture, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring often and scraping up any browned bits, until onion is deeply browned and slightly sticky, about 30 minutes. (If onion is sizzling or scorching, reduce heat. If onion is not browning after 15 to 20 minutes, increase heat.)

3. Stir in mushrooms and cook until they have released their moisture, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic and cayenne and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in water, broth, and rice, scraping up any browned bits, and bring to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes.

4. Stir in chard, kale, and parsley, 1 handful at a time, until wilted and submerged in liquid. Return to simmer, cover, and cook until greens are tender, about 10 minutes.

5. Off heat, stir in arugula until wilted. Working in batches, process soup in blender until smooth, about 1 minute. Return pureed soup to clean pot and season with salt and pepper to taste. Drizzle individual portions with lemon-tarragon cream, and serve.





spicy moroccan-style lamb and lentil soup (harira)

serves 8

why this recipe works Harira is a heavily spiced, intensely flavored Moroccan soup of lentils, tomatoes, chickpeas, and often chicken or lamb that is rich and soul-satisfying. For this version we created a soup worthy of its North African heritage using an inexpensive cut of lamb: shoulder chops. After searing pieces of lamb and setting them aside, we built the stock with onion, tomato, and a laundry list of spices and then simmered the lamb, lentils, and chickpeas in the oven for even cooking and a hands-off method. We shredded the lamb before stirring it back in, and the texture of this meat made us swoon. This version was balanced, warming, and near perfect, but tasters wanted just a little more zing. We chose to finish the soup by stirring in a healthy portion of superspicy harissa paste, which gave incredible spice, heat, and depth. You can substitute store-bought harissa, though spiciness can vary greatly by brand. French green lentils (*lentilles du Puy*) will also work well here; the cooking time will remain the same. If you can't find lamb shoulder chops, you can substitute an equal amount of lamb shoulder roast trimmed of all visible fat.

harissa

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1½ tablespoons paprika

4 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons ground coriander

¾ teaspoon ground cumin

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

⅛ teaspoon salt

soup

1 pound lamb shoulder chops, trimmed of all visible fat, and cut into 2 inch pieces

Salt and pepper

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 onion, chopped fine

1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger

1 teaspoon ground cumin

½ teaspoon paprika

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Pinch saffron threads, crumbled

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

10 cups chicken broth

1 cup dried brown lentils, picked over and rinsed

4 plum tomatoes (about 1 pound), cored and cut into ¾-inch pieces

1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed

⅓ cup minced fresh cilantro

1. for the harissa Combine all ingredients in medium bowl; microwave on high until bubbling and fragrant, 15 to 30 seconds. Set aside to cool.

2. for the soup Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Season lamb with salt and pepper. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown lamb on all sides, about 8 minutes; transfer to plate. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons fat from pot.

3. Reduce heat to medium, add onion to fat left in pot and cook until softened, 5 to 7 minutes.

Stir in ginger, cumin, paprika, cinnamon, cayenne, saffron, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in flour and cook for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in broth, scraping up any browned bits and smoothing out any lumps. Return lamb and any accumulated juices to pot, bring to simmer, and cook for 10 minutes. Add lentils, cover, place pot in oven, and cook until fork slips easily in and out of lamb and lentils are tender, about 50 minutes.

4. Remove lamb from pot, let cool slightly, then using 2 forks, shred lamb into bite-size pieces, discarding pieces of fat. Meanwhile, stir in tomatoes and chickpeas and continue to simmer until flavors meld, about 10 minutes longer. Stir in shredded lamb and let it heat through, about 2 minutes. Stir in cilantro and ¼ cup harissa, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, passing extra harissa separately.



fresh corn chowder

serves 6

why this recipe works This thick and lush chowder is bursting with fresh corn flavor. Contributing to that flavor was bacon; we used the rendered fat to sauté onion and garlic to create a richly flavored base. We learned that water diluted the flavor of the chowder so we used chicken broth as our liquid. To pump up the corn flavor, we first added grated corn and corn milk, which came from scraping the cobs with the back of a butter knife, then we stirred in more whole kernels toward the end. With whole milk as our primary dairy component (we rejected all heavy cream as too rich), we added a few tablespoons of flour, which thickened our soup nicely but also helped stabilize the dairy and kept it from curdling. This soup tastes best with sweet corn from the height of the season; do not substitute frozen corn.

10 ears fresh corn, husks and silk removed

4 slices bacon, chopped fine

1 onion, chopped fine

2 garlic cloves, minced

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

3 cups chicken broth

2 cups whole milk

12 ounces red potatoes, unpeeled and cut into 1/4-inch cubes

2 bay leaves

1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme or 1/4 teaspoon dried

1 cup heavy cream

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

Salt and pepper

1. Working with 1 ear of corn at a time, stand 4 ears on end inside large bowl and cut kernels from cob using paring knife. Grate remaining 6 ears over large holes of box grater into separate bowl. Using back of butter knife, scrape remaining pulp from all cobs into bowl with grated corn.

2. Cook bacon in Dutch oven over medium heat until crisp, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in onion and cook until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in flour and cook for 1 minute. Slowly stir in broth and milk, scraping up any browned bits. Stir in potatoes, bay leaves, thyme, and grated corn and pulp mixture. Bring to simmer and cook until potatoes are almost tender, about 15 minutes.

3. Stir in remaining corn kernels and cream. Continue to simmer until corn kernels are tender yet still slightly crunchy, about 5 minutes. Discard bay leaves. Stir in parsley and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.



beef bone broth

why this recipe works Our deeply flavorful, nuanced beef broth can be used in recipes or enjoyed as a drinking broth. We started with the most important ingredient: the beef. Many recipes call for roasting beef bones, but these broths didn't have much beefy flavor; using meat alone produced thin broths that lacked body. Finally, we settled on oxtails—they were economical, widely available, and served as all-in-one bundles of flavor-packed meat, fat, collagen-rich connective tissue, and bone marrow. Plus, since they're sold precut, they didn't require any special preparation at home. Next, we needed to figure out how to extract the most flavor from the oxtails. We browned them first to create fond, then simmered the broth for 24 hours: This broth had a beautiful mahogany color, rich beefy flavor, and luxurious, almost silky texture. An onion, a bit of tomato paste, and some bay leaves enhanced the broth's meaty flavor while adding a touch of aromatic sweetness, and white mushrooms played a crucial role in rounding out the overall flavor with their warm, savory tones. We found that the long, slow simmer could be accomplished in a 200-degree oven or in a slow cooker set on low, keeping our recipe stream-lined and hands-off. Try to buy oxtails that are approximately 2 inches thick and 2 to 4 inches in diameter; they will yield more flavor for the broth. Oxtails can often be found in the freezer section of the grocery store; if using frozen oxtails, be sure to thaw them completely before using. If using a slow cooker, you will need one that holds 5½ to 7 quarts.

makes about 8 cups

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

6 pounds oxtails

1 large onion, chopped

8 ounces white mushrooms, trimmed and chopped

2 tablespoons tomato paste

10 cups water

3 bay leaves

Kosher salt and pepper

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Pat oxtails dry with paper towels. Brown half of oxtails, 7 to 10 minutes; transfer to large bowl. Repeat with remaining 1 tablespoon oil and remaining oxtails; transfer to bowl.

2. Add onion and mushrooms to fat left in pot and cook until softened and lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in tomato paste and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in 2 cups water, bay leaves, 1 teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper, scraping up any browned bits.

3a. for the oven Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Stir remaining 8 cups water into pot, then return browned oxtails and any accumulated juices to pot and

bring to simmer. Fit large piece of aluminum foil over pot, pressing to seal, then cover tightly with lid. Transfer pot to oven and cook until broth is rich and flavorful, about 24 hours.

3b. for the slow cooker Transfer browned oxtails and any accumulated juices and vegetable mixture to slow cooker. Stir in remaining 8 cups water. Cover and cook until broth is rich and flavorful, about 24 hours on low.

4. Remove oxtails, then strain broth through fine-mesh strainer into large container; discard solids. Let broth settle for 5 to 10 minutes, then defat using wide, shallow spoon or fat separator. (Cooled broth can be refrigerated for up to 4 days or frozen for up to 1 month.)



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