

Soups!

From the kitchen of Cheryll Goldscheid

Andalusian Gazpacho

While there are myriad versions of gazpacho, this recipe is rooted in the original home of the chilled summer classic, Spain. Summer vegetables and cubed bread provide the body while vinegar and cayenne pepper contribute a trace of heat.

4 ripe tomatoes, diced
1 cucumber peeled and chopped
1 small yellow onion, diced
1 medium red bell pepper, seeded and diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups trimmed and coarsely chopped French or Italian bread
1 cup tomato or Vegetable Juice
4 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Combine all of the ingredients (except the parsley in a large mixing bowl and blend thoroughly. Transfer to a blender or food processor fitted with a steel blade and process for 5 to 10 seconds until pureed. Refrigerate the gazpacho for at least 2 hours, preferably overnight.

Serve the gazpacho in chilled bowls and top with the parsley.

Yield: 6 servings

Soup Tips:

It is a Spanish tradition to accompany gazpacho with bowls of chopped cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers and croutons.

West African Groundnut Stew

This classic soup displays the versatility of groundnuts (otherwise known as peanuts). In West African kitchens groundnuts are pureed into pastes and added to soups, sauces, and stews. This aromatic version is fortified with ginger, tomatoes, and sweet potato. Couscous, a fluffy North African semolina-grain like pasta, makes a natural accompaniment.

1 Tablespoon canola oil
1 medium yellow onion, diced
1 yellow or red bell pepper, seeded and diced

2 cloves garlic, minced
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger.
1 cayenne or serrano chile, seeded and minced
2 cups water
2 cups tomato juice
1 14-ounce can stewed tomatoes
1 medium sweet potato, diced (about 2 cups)
1 Tablespoon dried parsley
1 1/2 teaspoons dried thyme
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup chunky peanut butter (preferably unsweetened)
2 cups shredded red Swiss chard or spinach

In a large saucepan heat the oil. Add the onion, bell pepper, garlic, ginger, and chile, and saute for 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in the water, tomato juice, stewed tomatoes, sweet potato, and seasonings, and cook for 25 minutes over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the potato is tender.

Aggressively stir in the peanut butter. Stir in the chard, and return to a gentle simmer, stirring frequently. Remove the stew from the heat and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes.

Ladle into bowls and serve with a bowl of couscous or rice and roasted plantains.

Yield 6 servings

Soup Tips:

For last-minute garnish, top each bowl of soup with a tablespoon of roasted, chopped peanuts and scallions.

Hot and Sour Soup

Using the soaking liquid from the shiitake mushrooms adds amazing flavor to the soup. It's a little spicy and a little sour. Add or remove the chili sauce and vinegar to suit your taste.

1/4 oz dried shiitake mushrooms
1 cup boiling water
1 small carrot, peeled and cut into matchsticks
4 cups vegetable stock
1 cup bean sprouts
1/4 lb firm tofu, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
1/8 cup water chestnuts, cut into matchsticks
2 Tablespoons soy sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons sambal oelek (chili sauce)
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1 cup cold water
2 eggs
1 Tablespoons toasted sesame oil
3 Tablespoons rice wine vinegar
1-2 green onions (scallions), sliced very thin

Rinse the dried shiitake mushrooms well and put them in a bowl. Pour the boiling water over them and set aside, covered, until the mushrooms have cooled. When cool enough to handle, take them out of the water. If the mushrooms are whole, take off the stems and discard, then slice the mushroom caps into thin strips.

Slowly pour the remaining mushroom water into the soup pot, being careful to leave any residue in the bottom of the bowl. Add the carrot and stock to the pot, cover and bring to a boil.

When the soup has boiled, turn the heat down so it is simmering gently and add the bean sprouts, mushrooms, tofu, bamboo shoots, water chestnuts, soy sauce, sambal oelek and black pepper and simmer for 1-2 minutes.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and cold water. Pour into the soup and mix well. Allow soup to cook another 1-2 minutes, until it has thickened.

In another bowl, whisk together the eggs and sesame oil. In a slow, thin stream, pour the mixture into the soup and wait 10 seconds before stirring. Add the vinegar. Garnish with green onions and serve.

Middle Eastern Squash and Couscous Soup

Your house will smell amazing when you cook this soup. As soon as the spices hit the pan, they release fantastic aromas. The soup tastes just as great as it smells.

1 small yellow onion, peeled and finely chopped
3 Tablespoons olive oil
2-4 cloves garlic crushed
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon coriander
1 medium acorn squash (about 3/4 lb.), peeled, seeded and cubed
1 small carrot, peeled and thinly sliced
8 cups stock

1 can (16-19 oz.) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
1/3 cup couscous

Over medium heat, saute the onion in olive oil, 3-4 minutes

Add spices and cook 1-2 minutes, stirring continuously.

Add squash and carrot and saute another 3-4 minutes

Add stock, cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes on medium-low heat.

Add chickpeas and couscous, and simmer 3-5 minutes. (If you are using a very fine couscous, this may not take as long, and a larger, Israeli-style couscous may need a couple of extra minutes of cooking.)

Serves 8, don't freeze

Curried Spinach and Sorrel Soup

The lemony tang of sorrel is the backbone of this soup, and fresh white goat cheese melts into the soup before it is pureed to give it a rich creaminess. It is a tasty hot soup, and in the summer is equally delicious when served chilled. If you have a jar of roasted and peeled pimiento peppers on hand, dice one and scatter the red morsels across the smooth green soup for a beautiful effect.

12 oz. Fresh spinach leaves
12 oz. fresh sorrel leaves
1 small bunch green onions, white and green parts
1 lb. yukon gold potatoes
4-5 cups vegetable broth
1 1/2 tsp curry powder
1/2 teaspoon sea salt, plus more to taste
5 oz. creamy fresh goat cheese
1 cup whole milk
2 Tablespoons minced fresh basil leaves
freshly ground black pepper

garnish, fruity green olive oil or a swirl of heavy cream
optional garnish, diced pimentos

Wash the spinach and sorrel leaves and remove any tough stems. Clean and slice the green onions. Scrub, trim, and dice the potatoes.

Combine the vegetables and the broth in a large soup pot. Add the curry powder and, unless the broth is already very salty, half a teaspoon of salt. Bring the

broth to a boil, turn the heat down to medium, and simmer, covered, until the potatoes are completely tender, 20 to 25 minutes.

Remove the soup from the heat, then stir in the cheese and let it melt. Stir in the milk and the basil. Puree the soup until smooth, or leave it lightly textured if you prefer, but be careful not to over process, as that can turn the potatoes gummy. Working in batches with a traditional blender is probably best for this soup: by the time you chase down the last few potato or onion stragglers with an immersion blender, the soup could be viscous. (And a food processor should never be used to puree soups). Taste, and correct the seasoning with salt and pepper if needed.

To serve the soup hot, bring it just to the point of simmering but do not let it boil. To serve it cold, chill it for several hours or overnight. In either case, finish the soup with a few drops of fruity olive oil on top of each serving or a swirl of heavy cream in the bowl, which is fabulous, though not strictly necessary. Garnish with a scattering of diced red pimentos if you have them.

Watercress can be used in place of the sorrel in this soup. If using watercress, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice at the end to supply the tart edge that sorrel delivers.

Serves 6-8