

# Best Chicken Corn Soup — Ever

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EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.)**

Ban the mother-in-law jokes in Arlene Giberson's presence. No demeaning comments about mother-in-laws allowed. Arlene owes a lot to her mother-in-law (the former Frances Giberson).

It was her mother-in-law that enabled Arlene to win the top prize of \$300 for the best chicken corn soup ever.

"I spent a lot of time learning to cook from my mother-in-law so that I could make food the way my husband liked it," Arlene said.

Her soup is also the way the panel of five judges likes chicken corn soup. Arlene's entry placed first during the Pennfield Farms Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off held June 17 at The Artworks in Ephrata.

"I knew she'd win," said her husband Robert. "She's a great cook — even better than my mother at many of the things she makes."

As if that comment wasn't the ultimate praise, Robert said that you can take the same ingredients and put them in front of two cooks and my wife's (soup) will always taste the best.

"That's because she knows the exact moment when it's done," he said.

During competition, after Arlene had removed her soup from the stove, a photographer asked her to put the soup back on the burner and bring it to a boil so that he could get a picture of the soup with steam rising from it.

Arlene refused. "It's finished. If I put it back on the stove, it will be overcooked and the chicken will taste stringy," she said.

Although this was the first cooking competition she entered, it wasn't the first time that she heard raves about her soup.

She said that every fall, the family hosts a crowd in their backyard at their Willow Street home. "My soup seems to be a major draw. Friends and neighbors often tell me that it's the best they've eaten."

Since Arlene is primarily a dump and taste cook, she found it a bit difficult to write down exact measurements for the soup, but after a few experimentations she was able to define the measurements for a written recipe that passed preliminary scrutiny and won her a spot in the finalists circle.

The next hurdle was to locate the right corn since this is not corn sea-

son for the county and Arlene's home-frozen corn supply was depleted. Her husband scouted the supermarkets, purchased some that had no taste, and discarded it. He finally located some fresh Silver Queen corn at a market.

"I bit some right off the cob before cooking it, and I told my wife this is a winner," Robert said.

He helped his wife cut off the corn and blanch it immediately. "The sooner you get corn blanched, the better it tastes; otherwise, the sugar in the corn turns to starch," he said.

The couple credit the fresh corn to the soup's appeal.

"Many people ask me if I had put sugar in my soup because it tasted sweet, but I did not. I made it exactly like the recipe I submitted," Arlene said.

The judges said the corn taste was wonderful. There were lots of corn and chicken chunks in just the right size in the soup, and the flavor of every ingredient was tops.

Second-place award and \$150 went to Darlene Scott of Chambersburg. She, too, said that "fresh corn is the secret."

As she cut corn off the cob during the competition, Darlene talked about her recipe.

"I spent a small fortune for the corn and it is not the best. Generally I use white corn, but I could only find yellow in my area so this won't taste as good as I usually make," Darlene said.

Another secret for prize-winning soup, Darlene said, is to cook it low and slow.

Darlene received her introduction to cooking in 4-H. Always a math whiz, Darlene planned to be a math teacher until her senior year in high school when she needed to take a home economics class.

"That cured me of math," said Darlene, who found out cooking and sewing were much more fun.

Since then, cooking and sewing have been part of several jobs that she has held. Now, she is an unit leader for Avon and has 35 people underneath her.

Her three children always raved about her soup and inspired her to enter the contest.

Third prize went to Wayne Frampton of Quarryville. He has been cooking for 25 years.

"The first bread that I made, you could throw it at the wall and hit it with a bat," Wayne said. But he persevered and became so good that he now has a sandwich and soup stand at Meadowbrook Market in Leola.

"People always tell me that I have the best-tasting chicken corn soup," Wayne said. That includes his wife Sandra, a daughter, and loyal customers at his Meadowbrook Market stand.

He needed to adapt his recipe a bit to make a smaller batch for competition. Generally he makes the broth one day and stores it in the refrigerator so that he can skim off the fat before adding other ingredients. But, on competition day, Wayne speeded up the process to make it a one-day affair.

Six semi-finalists for the event were chosen from more than 30 mail-in entries.

Pennfield Farms sponsored the cook-off as part of the Pennsylvania Dutch Food Festival, which is a celebration of food throughout the Pennsylvania Dutch county from June 13 to 18.

Judges for the event included Pat Johnson, food writer for Lancaster Newspaper; George Weigel, food writer for Harrisburg Patriot News; Chuck Eichmann, chef for Donecker's Restaurant; Lori Burkholder, WGAL-TV Live co-host; and Betty Groff, owner of Groff's Farm Restaurant.

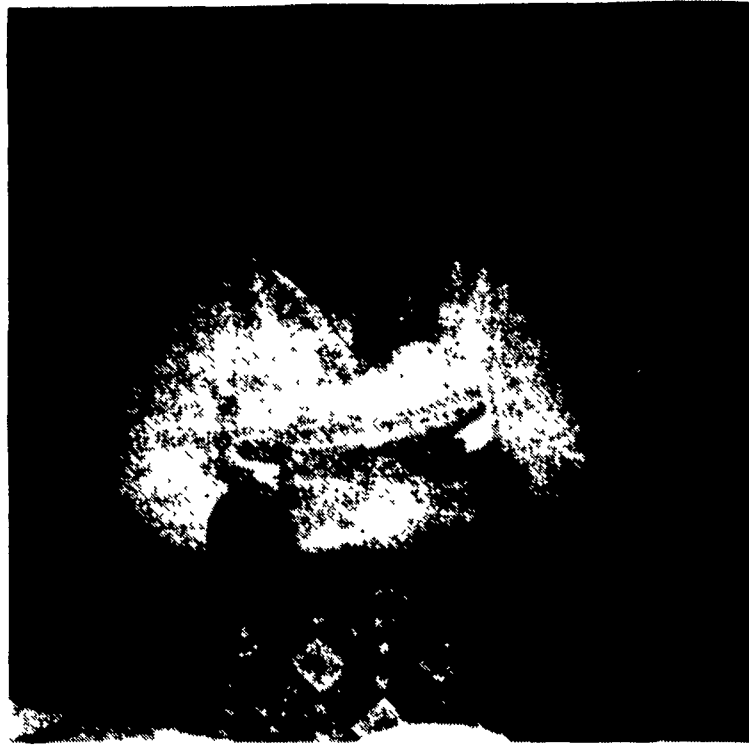
For those who are eager to try these mouth-watering soups, here are the recipes of the top three placings.

**ARLENE GIBERSON  
CHICKEN CORN SOUP  
First Prize**

- 3 pounds chicken pieces
  - 3 quarts water
  - 2 teaspoons salt
  - ¼ teaspoon pepper
  - 7 cups white corn, fresh or frozen
  - 1 tablespoon instant bouillon, or to taste
  - 2 tablespoons butter
  - 2 hard-cooked eggs, chopped
  - 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- Rivels:
- ¼ cup flour
  - 1 egg, beaten
  - 2 tablespoons water
- Cook chicken in water and salt until tender. Remove chicken from broth, cool, and remove from bones.

Add corn, bouillon, and pepper to hot broth, return to boil and cook for 10 minutes.

Mix flour, egg, and water. Drop rivel mixture by ¼ teaspoonfuls into boiling soup; continue cooking 5 minutes. Add chopped eggs, parsley, butter, and chicken. Do not cook again as broth is hot enough to heat the chicken. Yields 8 — 1½ cup servings. (Turn to Page B21)



Fresh corn and a rich chicken stock results in a first-prize placing and \$300 for Arlene Giberson.



Second-place winner Darlene Scott said that the secret of good chicken corn soup is in fresh corn.



"This is my first contest. I'm scared to death, but it's a lot of fun," Wayne Frampton of Quarryville said. Wayne placed third and won \$75.



Semi-finalists in the Pennfield Farms Chicken Corn Soup Cook-Off includes, from left: Marian Wille, Darlene Scott, Wayne Frampton, Arlene Giberson, David Fellenbaum, and Wendy Newswanger. Tim Horn of Pennfield Farms is on the right.