

Tips For Better Soups And Casseroles

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff

LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — With soup simmering on the stove, winter's chill doesn't seem as harsh. Intersperse those soup days with some easy-to-make casseroles.

In addition to delicious taste, the advantage of concocting your own soups and casseroles is that it's easy to adapt to using what you have on hand. Soups and casseroles are not like cakes and breads where every ingredient must be exactly measured or it flops.

Recently, a workshop on making hearty soups and casseroles was held at the Lebanon County Extension Center. Alletta Schadler, home economist and extension director, stirred up a bunch of different recipes for attendees to sample.

Time-saving techniques for making flavorful recipes was the focus of the workshop. Adapting and modifying recipes to cut fat but maintain flavor and nutrition was also explored.

Seasoned cooks know that the key to a rich full-bodied soup lies in the stock. The instructions to making the best chicken and beef stocks are included in this article. Make a large batch, divide and freeze in containers, and you have a head start whenever you want to use the stock for a soup base.

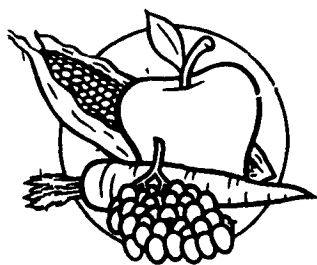
Make sure that you allow the broth to cool and remove the fat that forms at the top before using.

If you like cream soups, check out the recipe for Cream of Anything Soup. The recipe included in this article has a make-ahead-dry-mix that may be kept in a glass jar on the kitchen counter. When you are ready to make soup, the liquid ingredients, vegetables and meat can be combined with the dry mix to make a quick and delicious cream soup.

Pearl barley, wild rice, dried beans, and pasta add interesting flavor to soups and casseroles. Cumin is a flavoring that adds taste to soups and casseroles. Sprinkle parmesan cheese on top of dishes to add a punch of flavor without the fat.

Dried beans and lentils are hailed as excellent sources of protein without fat. They are being heavily advocated in diets of those who want to cut cholesterol and fat. Several recipes using both canned beans and the dried package version were given at the workshop. These will be printed in the upcoming issue of this paper in the "Home On The Range" section. If you want to learn about the complementary protein combinations needed to make a complete protein and varied ways to prepare dried beans and lentils, make sure you watch for the article.

Here are recipes for soups and casseroles prepared at the workshop. If you are hesitant to prepare new recipes, especially lower-fat ones, because the taste may be bland, you needed be concerned about these. These all received the endorsement for great taste from workshop attendees.



CREAM OF ANYTHING SOUP Quick Mix

2 cups non-fat dry milk powder
¼ cup cornstarch or regular clear-jel
3 tablespoons instant granular chicken bouillon
2 tablespoons instant minced onion
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1½ teaspoon dry herbs
¼ teaspoon ground pepper

Combine all ingredients in a dry one-quart container. Stir or shake to mix. Keep covered tightly and store at room temperature. (4 tablespoons of mix will thicken and flavor 1 cup water).

TO MAKE SOUP:
3 cups water
¾ cup mix
1 to 2 cups cooked vegetables
2 to 3 slices processed cheese, optional

Blend water and mix together. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add cooked vegetables. Pour into blender container. Blend to texture desired. You may want to blend this in two batches. Return to saucepan, add cheese if desired, and heat to serving temperature. Add meat or fish cubes, if desired.

This recipe makes enough mix to prepare about 12 cups cream soup. You can vary the flavor of granular bouillon used and change the herb seasoning used. Suggested blends might be McCormick Salad Herbs, thyme, marjoram, parsley, or rosemary.

You can add one or several combinations of cooked vegetables. Suggested vegetables are broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, asparagus, watercress, peas, celery, or mushrooms. Meat or tuna may be added before or after blending.

As prepared, this is a low-fat recipe. To make it richer, add several slices processed cheese to the batch after it is thickened. This adds calcium, calories, and salt.

If you are on a sodium restricted diet, use 5 to 6 envelopes low sodium bouillon powder in place of 3 tablespoons regular granulated bouillon.

Note: This same mixture may be used to make a sauce for vegetables. Combine:

1½ cups water
¾ cup mix
2 tablespoons butter

LES HALLES FRENCH ONION SOUP

6 cups brown beef stock
6 large yellow onions, sliced thinly
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon oil
½ cup port wine
½ cup diced Gruyere or Colby cheese

¼ cup shredded Parmesan or Romano and Gruyere or Colby
6 slices buttered toasted French bread ½-inch thick

1 tablespoon butter, melted
Saute onions in butter and oil until limp. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Pour in beef stock and simmer 30 minutes. Taste, season if necessary. Add port wine and simmer 30 minutes longer.

Add diced cheese to hot soup. Ladle into individual bowls if preferred. Top casserole or bowls with toasted bread, sprinkle with cheese, drizzle with butter. Place in 425 degree oven for 10 minutes, turn on broiler and heat until browned. Serve at once.



Alletta Schadler, Lebanon County extension director, demonstrates making hearty soups and casseroles at a recent workshop held at the extension center.

CHICKEN STOCK

5 pounds chicken pieces
4 quarts water
2 onions, peeled, quartered
4 stalks celery with tops, cut into 2-inch pieces
4 carrots, scraped and cut into 2-inch pieces
1 large bay leaf
6 sprigs fresh parsley
1 tablespoon fresh thyme
6 sprigs fresh dill
¼ teaspoon black peppercorns

Combine chicken and water in a large stockpot; bring to a boil, skimming the surface to remove excess fat and foam.

Add onions and remaining ingredients. Return to a boil; reduce heat, and simmer, uncovered, 2 hours, skimming surface, if necessary. Cool.

Line a large wire-mesh strainer with a double layer of cheesecloth; place in large bowl. Pour stock through strainer; reserve chicken for other uses, and discard remaining solids. Cool slightly.

Cover and refrigerate stock. Remove and discard solidified fat from top of stock. Refrigerate up to 2 days or freeze up to one month. Yield: 2 quarts.

BEEF STOCK

5 pounds beef or veal bones
2 large carrots, quartered
2 large onions, quartered
4 stalks celery, quartered
4 quarts water, divided
3 tablespoons tomato paste
6 to 8 sprigs fresh parsley.
3 to 4 sprigs fresh thyme
4 whole cloves
¼ teaspoon black peppercorns
1 bay leaf
2 cloves garlic, crushed

Place bones, carrots, onions, and celery into a large roasting pan; bake at 500 degrees for 1 hour, turning occasionally.

Transfer mixture to a large stockpot; discard drippings into roasting pan. Set aside.

Add 1 quart water to roasting pan; bring to a boil over medium high heat, stirring to loosen pieces. Pour into stockpot; add 3 quarts water and remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, cover, and simmer 2 hours.

Line a large wire-mesh strainer with a double layer of cheesecloth;

place in a large bowl. Pour stock through strainer, discarding solids. Cool slightly.

Cover and refrigerate; remove and discard solidified fat from top of stock. Refrigerate up to 2 days or freeze up to one month.

HAM AND TURKEY SPAGHETTI

8-ounce package thin spaghetti, uncooked
2 tablespoons butter
6 green onions, sliced
1½ cups sliced fresh mushroom rooms
1½ cups chopped, cooked ham
1½ cups chopped, cooked turkey or chicken

12-ounce carton nonfat cottage cheese
8-ounce carton reduced-fat sour cream

2 tablespoons milk
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon celery salt
¼ to ½ teaspoon pepper
1 cup reduced-fat sharp cheddar cheese

Cook spaghetti according to package directions and set aside.

Melt butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat; add green onions and mushrooms, and cook, stirring constantly, until crisp-tender. Add ham and turkey; toss gently. Set mixture aside.

Combine cottage cheese and next 5 ingredients in a large bowl; add spaghetti and meat mixture. Toss gently. Spoon into a lightly greased 13x9x2-inch baking dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with cheese. Bake 5 additional minutes. 8 servings.

WHITE CHILI

3 whole boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into ½-inch cubes
2 cups chopped onions
2 medium green bell peppers, seeded, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 (15.5-ounce) cans Great Northern beans, drained, rinsed
14½-ounce chicken broth
2 (4.5-ounce) cans chopped green chiles, drained
¼ teaspoon cumin
6 (1½-cup) servings. Calories 300, dietary fiber 7 g, fat 5 g, cholesterol 73 mg, sodium 730 mg.

SPICY BEAN AND SHRIMP DINNER

1 cup uncooked orzo or rosamarina (rice-shaped pasta)
½ cup sliced green onions
1 garlic clove, minced
¼ teaspoon dried red pepper flakes

8-ounces fresh or frozen shelled deveined uncooked medium shrimp

15.5-ounce can pinto beans, drained, rinsed
9-ounce package frozen cut broccoli, thawed

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon dried basil leaves
2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese

In large nonstick saucepan, cook orzo to desired doneness as directed on package. Drain; keep warm.

Spray same large nonstick saucepan with nonstick cooking spray. Heat over medium-high heat until hot. Add onions, garlic, red pepper flakes and shrimp. Cook and stir 2 to 4 minutes or until shrimp turns pink.

Add cooked orzo and remaining ingredients except cheese; mix well. Cook, uncovered, over medium-low heat about 2 minutes, or until thoroughly heated, stirring occasionally. Stir in cheese. 4 (1½ cups) servings.

Calories 450, 10 g fat, 10 g dietary fiber, 90 mg cholesterol, 180 mg sodium.

CABBAGE CASSEROLE

Halupki

1 small head cabbage, chopped
1 pound ground beef or turkey
½ cup water
1 medium onion, chopped
½ cup uncooked rice
2 cups tomato sauce
1 egg, beaten, optional
¼ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon salt, optional
¼ teaspoon oregano
¼ teaspoon basil

Place chopped cabbage in a greased baking dish. In a large bowl, mix ground meat with the remaining ingredients. Place meat mixture on top of chopped cabbage in the baking dish.

Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 45-60 minutes. Check in 30 minutes and add more water or tomato sauce if the casserole is too dry.