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Belinda Hulin



THE EVERYTHING SOUP, STEW, & CHILI COOKBOOK

Dear Reader,

Writing this cookbook has been a happy adventure. Usually, when I share the subject of an in-progress cookbook with family and friends, they demand recipes. Or cooking tips. However, when I told people I was writing *The Everything® Soup, Stew, & Chili Cookbook*, the tables turned. Instead of asking for recipes, everyone wanted to give me recipes. Over and over I heard, “My grandma’s chicken soup is the absolute best” or “Here, you’ve just got to include my rabbit stew” or “My uncle gave me his green chili recipe—you’ve never tasted anything so good!”

Of course, most of the recipes shared were more like compass points than actual roadmaps. That’s because soups, stews, and chilies are among the most flexible and personal of dishes. The same recipe can vary based on the mood of the cook, the availability of fresh ingredients, the amount of liquid added, and the time available for simmering. Having been raised on my mother’s heirloom gumbo and fricassee recipes and my father’s ever-evolving chili pot, I can attest to the joy of anticipating the nuances of every batch.

In this book you’ll find recipes that represent the culinary heart of many different cultures. One cook’s strange new curry is another’s family comfort food. Follow the recipes as given or use them as a starting point for your own explorations. Either way, my great hope is that you’ll find recipes you’ll embrace and want to share.

Belinda Hulin

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THE
EVERYTHING.
SOUP, STEW
& CHILI
COOKBOOK

BELINDA HULIN

 **Adams**media
Avon, Massachusetts

*To my daughter Sophie and son Dylan, who
never tire of helping me stir the pot.*

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Introduction

THINK OF IT AS comfort in a bowl. Soups, stews, and chilies certainly provide an economical source of nourishment. But these creations are so much more than the sum of their ingredients. No two batches can be exactly alike because each carries the *terroir*—the flavor signatures—of its components captured at the moment of preparation. In addition, each version of a soup, stew, or chili recipe is influenced by the whim, the mood, the loving hands of the cook.

A good recipe can ensure a good dish, but it can't predict the grace notes added by time, place, and human expression. A bumper crop of fresh zucchini, a particularly fragrant bunch of basil, a dish of savory leftover pot roast; such variables are what make any slow-simmered jumble of ingredients a wonderful, original work of art.

Anthropologists quibble over where and when the first pot of soup or stew appeared. Some credit the Neanderthals with softening foods in water in a hollowed bit of bark. Others note later evidence that African and European tribes learned to cook meat and plants together in the sealed stomach cavities of animals, while South American tribes used hollowed turtle shells as soup and stew vessels. Purists date the first real soups and stews—and in South America, where peppers were thrown in, chilies—around 10,000 b.c., when ceramic pots appeared on the scene.

References to soups and stews appear in the earliest surviving cookbooks, including some dating to the third century. By the Middle Ages, sages and essayists were recommending chicken soup as a cure for all manner of infirmities. Early American writings on food trace recipes and soup customs with English, German, and French origins. Added to that early melting pot were offerings from Native Americans featuring tree nuts and wild greens. Journal entries from the colonial period make clear that soup, then as now, was considered a community-building dish that required both generosity and sharing.

Soup became a lifesaving elixir during the Great Depression. Beginning in 1929, churches and charities opened makeshift dining halls serving hot soup and bread to anyone who lined up for a meal. Eventually, soup kitchens cropped up across the U.S., with bean and chicken soups being ladled out in most cities and towns. Many were operated by the Volunteers of America, some by municipal governments and nonprofit groups. Al Capone even opened a soup kitchen in his hometown, Chicago.

Modern households appreciate these ancient dishes for the same reasons as our ancestors; namely, sustenance and satisfaction. However, in addition, we've learned that soups, stews, and chilies can be an easy and accessible way to sample the flavors of other cultures, to expand our own culinary horizons, and to entertain friends. A hearty Louisiana gumbo, a delicate ginger-scented broth, a fiery but rich Thai coconut chicken soup—the varieties of soups, stews, and chilies in the world are limited only by the collective imaginations of cooks.

In *The Everything® Soup, Stew, & Chili Cookbook*, you'll find a broad sampling of both classic and

innovative dishes from around the globe. You'll also learn everything you need to create your own unique offerings. The important thing to remember is this: Relax; soups, stews, and chilies are naturally forgiving dishes. Enjoy the process, and your family and friends will love the results.

Bowled Over!

Soups, stews, and chilies are, of necessity, slow food. The process of making stock, selecting and chopping ingredients, braising and simmering can't be rushed. And while the food cooks, the cook has time to reflect, consider, make adjustments. For this reason, every bowl of soup, stew, or chili is a work of art, each as individual as a thumbprint. And yet, every batch reflects the contributions of multiple cultures and has roots in ancient civilizations.

The Evolution of Soups and Stews

The first soups and stews probably originated with the first prehistoric cook who figured out how to soak flora or fauna in water to make it more easily edible. That said, food historians credit the advent of cooking pots—clay or carved stone vessels able to withstand high temperatures—with the arrival of soups and stews that resemble the dishes you know today. Without heat-safe pots, water could not be boiled for extended periods. Very hot water is needed to dissolve meat sinews, break down plant fibers, and extract nutrients from otherwise inedible bones. The flavorful broth would have been a happy side benefit of cooking meats and vegetables in a pot.

The first stews were probably porridges of grain—which boiling would have rendered soft and thick—studded with meats and berries. No doubt, soups left on the fire too long were another source of prehistoric stew.



Archeological evidence suggests that once animals became domesticated and crops cultivated, soups and stews flourished. Ancient cooks around the Mediterranean in particular, including Southern Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East, used soups and stews extensively, boiling their harvest in crockery vessels. Biblical scholars cite references to lentil stew in the tale of brothers Esau and Jacob, and an a.d. 4 Roman cookbook offers instructions for stew making.

Although early recipes and practices passed from country to country via migrations, armies, and trading vessels, the ultimate melting pot for soups and stews was the colonial United States. The British brought their recipes for pea soup, duck soup, and broths; the Germans added potato soup, fruit soups, meaty stews, and dumplings; French settlers added soups thickened with roux, julienne vegetable mélanges, and turtle soup. Strongly flavored soups and stews with tomatoes, peppers, fish, sausages, and beans were the province of the Spanish. African hands stirred the pots with okra, green beans, pork, and herbs. The first writings about food from the American colonies mention both subsistence and well-laden tables offering soups and stewed meats.

During the 1800s, home cooks canned soups for year-round use and travelers could reconstitute dried soup mixes while en route from one corner of the United States to another. But the biggest development in the distribution and automation of soup came in 1899, when Joseph Campbell figured out how to make canned, condensed soup in a preserving and canning factory outside Philadelphia. Five years later, the company was selling 16 million cans of condensed soup a year, including Tomato, Vegetable, Chicken, Con-sommé, and Oxtail varieties. Today, the company sells more than 2.5 billion cans of soup annually, and it is by no means the only major player.

Combine commercial soup sales—including restaurant soups, canned soups, aseptic-pack soups, improved dehydrated soups, and gourmet frozen soups—with the gallons of soups made by home

cooks every day, and there's no doubt that soup is one of the world's most beloved dishes.

Old- and New-World Chilies

The New World is actually the Old World where chilies are concerned. Sweet and hot chili (or chili peppers) have been traced back some 10,000 years to South America. There's evidence that ancient peoples of what is now the western United States cultivated peppers, as did tribes in Mexico and Central and South America. Christopher Columbus discovered several varieties of capsicums on his journey of discovery in 1492, and within a couple of years, peppers began turning up in Spain, Portugal, the Caribbean, India, Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and parts of Africa.

Spanish and Portuguese explorers valued dried chilies, which they scraped and powdered, as a substitute for black pepper, which is one of the things that sent them on their voyages of exploration. However, they carried capsicum plants home and to other colonies and quickly discovered how easily they grow. Stews using powdered and fresh chili peppers quickly became part of the local diet wherever the pepper plants took root. Locals added native ingredients and spices to the mix, yielding a vast array of chili-based dishes, which then became part of international cultural exchanges. One of the most interesting cases of this is Indian curry, which was embraced by the British during the Indian colonial period, then spread to other British Commonwealth nations, including the Caribbean Islands, where many Europeans first encountered chili peppers.

The meaty, saucy dish known as chili con carne (chili with meat) in the United States likely originated in San Antonio in the nineteenth century. Poor women of Spanish and Mexican descent used chili peppers to season, stretch, and otherwise make palatable stews of very low-quality beef. They prepared chili con carne for their families, then began to carry pots of chili to the central places for sale to soldiers, cattlemen, and railroad workers.



The precursor to chili con carne was probably a "chili brick" stew made by cowboys for cattle drives. The men created pressed-together bricks of dried beef, dried chili, and other desiccated ingredients, which made for a source of protein and sustenance that would not spoil along the trail. The bricks were dropped into pots of boiling water over campfires and simmered until the ingredients softened into a thick stew.

Texas historians note that San Antonio chili was a great equalizer of peoples, with swells and poor immigrants alike lining up next to their favorite chili purveyor's table. The dish, originally made with chili peppers, meat, onions, and a few other seasonings and served with a side of beans, eventually came to be served throughout North America, with each region boasting its own distinctive chili preferences and recipe secrets. Interestingly, the place where chili, the dish, did not really take hold was in the country where everyone assumes it originated. Chili con carne is not a Mexican import.

Types of Soups

Although soup recipes vary from country to country, culture to culture, and household to household, it is still possible to organize soups into three distinct categories.

Clear Soups

Clear soups include any soup that begins with a translucent broth. This includes broths, consommés, most chicken soups with rice or noodles, beef and vegetable soups, bouillabaisse, and tomato broth. It doesn't matter how packed a soup might be with meats, grains, and vegetables; the thing that makes it a clear soup is the presence of a translucent broth.

Cream Soups and Veloutés

Cream soups can be simple broths to which heavy cream or milk has been added, or they can be complicated bisques made from reduced seafood stock, puréed shellfish, and cream. Velouté is a French version of cream soup that begins with a butter-and-flour roux and may or may not include eggs as a thickener. Cream soups can be chunky, like clam chowder, while most veloutés are smooth soups.

Thick Soups

Thick soups include heavy vegetable purees, roux-thickened soups like gumbo, hearty bean soups, and fruit purées. Some chefs also classify cream soups and veloutés as thick soups.

Chili Powders, Fresh Chilies, and Spice Blends

The commercially prepared powdered spice known as chili powder is actually a blend of ingredients including powders from dried hot peppers, dried garlic, finely ground dried oregano, cumin, and salt. Depending on the brand, chili powders can be made from ancho chilies, cayenne chilies, pasilla chilies, or virtually any other hot pepper. They may also include small amounts of many other spices such as cinnamon, cloves, mace, and onion powder. This is why different brands often taste very different from one another.

Chili purists compose their own chili blends or make sauces using fresh roasted or reconstituted and puréed dried peppers, along with their own preferred quantities of ingredients like cumin and garlic. Increasingly, single-source chili powders have become available in supermarkets. Like cayenne, the peppery powders usually don't have extra ingredients, so you're getting a pure dose of chipotle chili, New Mexico chili, or ancho chili. If your favorite store doesn't stock single-source powders, try a Mexican food market or order online directly from pepper growers.

Asian chili preparations usually take the form of pastes rather than powders. This is because

perishable ingredients like lemongrass, galangal root, and Kaffir lime leaves are essential to the flavor of Southeast Asian dishes. These can't easily be powdered, hence the shelf-stable pastes. You can purchase hot Thai chilies or an equivalent chili pepper at many venues, but to get the full from-scratch experience, you'll have to track down an excellent Asian market that handles a range of perishable goods. For convenience, you may want to start by experimenting with different pastes.



Like chili powders, curry powders and jerk spice blends are recipes based on a popular notion of what should be included in a curry or jerk-seasoned dish. The two seasonings often share ingredients like nutmeg, mace, and cinnamon, but in differing quantities. Jerk powders are usually sweeter and hotter than curry powders.

In a Stew

By definition, a stew is simply a slowly cooked mélange of ingredients simmered together in one pot. The ingredients cook in a moderate amount of liquid, either added to the pot or drawn from the ingredients themselves. The cooking method can be braising or boiling on a stovetop, baking in an oven or on a hearth, or simmering in a slow cooker.

To make a good stew, it's important to respect the recipe ingredients. Meats should be seared—to add caramelized flavor and rich color to the stew—before any liquid is added. Vegetables can be par-cooked, roasted before adding or not, but all aromatics—onion, celery, carrots—should be cut into similar sized pieces so they cook evenly. Seasonings should be added to the browned meat and vegetables before liquids are added. Starches should be added last to keep them from overcooking or sticking.

Seafood stews are delicate affairs. Always cook ingredients that need a lengthy cooking time before adding seafood. Shrimp, clams, mussels, crabs, and lobsters should be cooked just until done, even if that means cooking some ingredients separately and combining a few minutes before serving.

If your stew is all-inclusive—that is, you aren't serving it over rice or another starch—think in terms of a twelve-ounce bowl per serving. One-third to one-half of the plate should be taken up by one or more star ingredients, such as seafood, beef, chicken, game, or pork. Starchy vegetables like potatoes, corn, or beans should occupy one-third of the dish, while sauce and aromatics make up the rest of the serving.

Taking Stock

The best soups and stews, and even some chilies, begin with a flavorful, rich broth. Most cooks have had experience making soups and other dishes with canned broths and many have crumbled a bouillon cube into a pot of boiling water. Soup bases, similar to the kind used in some commercial kitchens, have become increasingly available in supermarkets. These products vary in quality, flavor, and

additives and it's important to know how salty or seasoned a prepared broth will be before dumping into a dish you're spending time and money to prepare.

Only the most curmudgeonly purist—or a cook with plenty of time on her hands—would suggest there's no room for these handy shortcuts. That said, homemade broth is always best. With homemade, the cook controls the ingredients, the seasoning, the length of cooking time, and other variables. There are no unwanted surprises like monosodium glutamate, food coloring, preservatives, and trans fats.



In most recipes, the terms “broth” and “stock” are used interchangeably. In commercial-food terms, stock is a liquid made from boiling bones while broth is made from both meat and bones. Chefs make this simple distinction between the two: Stock is an unseasoned liquid that can be added to other ingredients to enhance flavor. Broth is a finished product. It can be added to recipes or it can be consumed as is.

Although homemade broth takes time to prepare, it isn't difficult and doesn't have to be expensive. Get in the habit of preparing broths during stay-at-home days when you can let a stock pot simmer on the stove for several hours. Store broths in the freezer in resealable plastic bags and thaw as needed.

Poultry and Meat Broths

The best poultry and meat broths begin with meaty bones and fatty scraps. Bits of chicken, turkey, duck, beef, veal, lamb, or pork—in the form of trimmings or meat on the bone—flavor the broth and leach nutrients into the liquid. The bones release minerals and gelatin, which gives broth its characteristic body and satiny mouthfeel. Gelatin is also the substance that makes cooled homemade broths congeal.

Raw ingredients, slowly simmered in water for three to six hours, make the most flavorful broths. However, there are two good reasons to use meat and bones leftover from such simple preparations as roasting and poaching. The first is availability. A chicken carcass, baked ham bone, or half-eaten pot roast au jus from Sunday dinner still has plenty of available flavor left and shouldn't go to waste. You may have to cook it longer to get the intensity you want, but that's a small inconvenience. The second reason to use specially cooked bones is to get a dark, roasted broth. Bones that have been caramelized—but never burned—in the oven produce a rich, brown broth with a slightly sweet, roasted essence. Roasted beef broths are essential to classic soups like French onion and consommé.



Make your own broth concentrate. After straining broth, reheat the liquid in a saucepan over medium heat until the broth is reduced by three-fourths. Pour this super-strong broth into ice cube trays, cover, and freeze until solid. Pop the frozen broth cubes into a resealable plastic bag and use as needed for sauces and soups. Two cubes can be diluted to make a cup of broth.

Regardless of whether you start your broth with raw or cooked ingredients, always begin with cold ingredients and cold water. Starting cold and slowly heating the meat and bones helps draw out the nutrients and gives the best taste. A bit of vinegar or lemon juice added early in the cooking process also helps to draw calcium from the bones.

As broths, particularly meat and poultry broths, cook, bits of impurities rise to the surface of the water. Skimming this gray foam from the broth will ensure a more translucent, aesthetically pleasing broth once it's strained.

Vegetable Broths

Vegetable broths have gained popularity in recent years as research has shown the health benefits of antioxidants and phytochemicals in fruits and veggies. Vegetarians and hosts who want to make sure dishes can be enjoyed by all their guests have also been stocking freezers with ready-to-use broths made from aromatic vegetables, root vegetables, and herbs.

As with meat and poultry broths, vegetable broths can begin with raw or roasted ingredients depending on the flavor and color desired in the finished product. Use onions, carrots, celery, mushrooms—any vegetables you like. That is, with a few caveats. Tomatoes overpower most other flavors in broth. Unless you're specifically looking for a light tomato broth, it's probably best to add tomatoes to the final recipe rather than the broth pot. Cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts give broths a bitter flavor and sulfurous scent and should be avoided. Bell peppers and celery leaves can turn broth bitter and should be used in moderation. Go easy on resinous herbs like rosemary.

Although cooks once used the stock pot to get rid of aging vegetables, peelings, and skins, that's no longer advised. What you put in the pot directly affects what you'll get out of it. So use fresh ingredients, and make sure they are well washed, peeled, or scrubbed to get the best vegetable broth.

Fish and Seafood Broths

Fish broth, or fish fumet as it's known among chefs, is the quickest cooking of all broths. Made properly, it's also one of the most satisfying. Proper fish broth should taste delicate, with a scent that very lightly hints of the ocean. Always use fish bones and gill-removed heads from lean white fish and cut aromatic vegetables, such as leeks and carrots, into small pieces.

Shellfish broth can be made in one of two ways: Either boil clean shrimp or lobster shells or crab claws to extract flavor or strain the cooking liquid from steaming clams, mussels, or lobster and use that. Don't use the liquid from Maryland-style steamed crabs or any other highly seasoned shellfish—the broth will taste more like spice than seafood.

Both fish and seafood broths can be enhanced by the addition of one-half to a cup of dry white wine to the cooking liquid. Add early in the cooking process to allow the alcohol to evaporate, leaving the

flavor behind.

The Right Equipment

There's nothing worse than trying to cook with inadequate or poorly constructed equipment. Mishaps such as boiling over and scorching can often be directly attributed to having the wrong size or wrong weight of cooking vessel. Cheap pots with loose handles can lead to a big mess at best, dangerous burns at worst. Dutch ovens that don't have tight-fitting covers, slow cookers that are hard to clean, poorly balanced ladles that fall into or out of the pot—these are all nuisances that can be avoided by smart shopping.

Stock Pots, Soup Pots, and Dutch Ovens

Good cookware is an investment that can last generations. Look for heavy-gauge pots made of anodized aluminum, cast aluminum alloys, or stainless steel with an aluminum core.

Aluminum—like copper and cast iron—is an excellent conductor of heat. However, like copper and cast iron, it is reactive. That means certain ingredients, such as tomatoes and other acidic foods, can pit and discolor the pot. In turn, some metal will leach into the liquid, discoloring the soup or sauce. Anodizing aluminum or adding other metals to cast aluminum mitigates the problem. Stainless steel with an aluminum core captures the conductivity of aluminum while eliminating the reactivity problem altogether. Nonstick interiors have become more durable, but if you choose nonstick pots, recognize that the surface coating will eventually wear or become less effective.

Regardless of the brand you choose, make sure the lids fit tightly and securely and that the handles are big enough for you to comfortably hold with pot holders. Start with a good, tall stock pot of at least eight quarts. For most soup and broth recipes, this will give you plenty of room to include solids and liquid ingredients with a few inches to spare. For braising, stews, and chilies, a Dutch oven that holds seven to nine quarts is a good idea. You'll probably want a five-quart Dutch oven for family use, but a double batch of any recipe will leave the small pot crowded.

Strainers

Colanders and strainers are essential to making broths and some noodle soups. A standard, heat-safe colander with large holes is needed to drain noodles and dumplings and to drain off fat from browned ground meats. However, you'll also need a large, fine-mesh strainer with hooks that can rest on the rim of a large bowl. The fine-mesh strainer will ensure broths that are free of bone fragments and other solids. Shop for stainless steel, aluminum, or enamel-coated implements that will resist rust.



These are the only two strainers you absolutely need. If you're a gadget aficionado, you can always add a China cap strainer (which makes it easy to press the liquid from solid ingredients) to your armory, as well as fine-mesh skimmers to remove foam and fat from bubbling broths.

Slow Cookers

To crock or not to crock? As far as the final product is concerned, it really doesn't matter. Slow cookers with nonstick metal cooking vessels work just as well as those with crockery inserts. In some cases, the crocks look nicer but they also break and chip more easily. Some cooks buy a large nonstick metal slow cooker for meats and stews, but also have a small crock-lined pot to keep sauces and fondues warm.

When shopping for a slow cooker, just make sure you get one that's big enough for the recipes you plan to prepare. Most cooks look for a five- or six-quart model. The unit should have low, medium, and high settings and the cooking vessel should be removable for cleaning. A clear lid that fits inside the lip of the pot will give a tight fit and keep condensation from dripping out of the pot. Slow cookers range in price from under \$20 to over \$60, and the price difference is usually attributable to bells and whistles like automatic shut-offs, timers, and sensors. Almost any meat dish can sit in a slow cooker on low for an hour or more after it's done with little harm, so don't buy more slow cooker than you need.

Slow cookers are essential appliances for cooks who don't want to tend pots all day. That said, remember that most don't brown meats effectively. If you want a nice caramelized coat on your beef stew cubes, brown them in a skillet before adding to the slow cooker. Also, slow cookers do not allow liquids to evaporate and reduce. Add only the amount of liquid you absolutely need for the dish you're preparing.



The term Crock-Pot is actually a registered trademark of the Rival Corp., maker of the first automatic cooker with a removable crockery insert. Although the term is often used generically, the original branded product still exists.

The Right Ladle

Picking a ladle is really just a matter of common sense. A ladle that's too short, too shallow, too flimsy, or too heat sensitive invites burns and spills.

For soups, get a metal, enamel, or heat-safe plastic-coated ladle that has a bowl capable of drawing at least one-half cup of soup from the pot. The handle should extend several inches above the rim of your favorite soup pot so the ladle can rest in the pot without sliding below the surface of the soup. A hooked end is nice, but only necessary if you expect the ladle to sit in the pot for long periods.

Likewise, the question of whether the handle should be plastic or wood covered to prevent burns is only relevant if the ladle will be in the hot liquid for long periods.

For stews, buy a ladle with a wider, shallower bowl. Being able to see what you're scooping will help distribute the various stew ingredients evenly among diners. A hard metal bowl also makes it easier to scoop meats and vegetables that may have settled to the bottom of the stew pot. Buy a ladle with a long-enough handle, but not too long and not too heavy. When serving from a relatively shallow Dutch oven or deep skillet, a heavy or long-handled ladle will become unbalanced and easily tip out of the pan, making a big mess.

Setting the Table

Soups, stews, and chilies are the refuge of cash-strapped hosts. So does it really matter how these one-pot wonders are presented? Well, yes and no. If you're having a big, casual dinner party with family and close friends, it's perfectly okay to allow guests to serve their own chili from a pot on the stove. But it's also fine—and not at all pretentious—to ladle the chili into a low, inexpensive pottery bowl, sprinkle the top with chopped cilantro and cheese, and set the bowl on a colorful placemat or a fan-folded \$1 bandanas. Guests can still serve themselves, but no one has to run back and forth to the kitchen, interrupting the conversation.

There are also dishes and utensils that are designed to accommodate certain types of recipes.

Soup Bowls, Mugs, and Porringers

Wide, low, rimmed soup bowls are the best option if you're only going to own one type of bowl. These dishes, also known as soup plates, usually hold a twelve-ounce serving. They're serviceable for smooth soups, but work particularly well for chunky soups, gumbos, chilies, and stews because the ingredients are spread over a large area. This allows guests to see what they're eating and leaves room for adding garnishes. The rim gives spoons a place to rest and keeps spills to a minimum. This size and shape also gives an appearance of abundance, which is important for main-dish soups and stews.

Double-handled, delicate cream-soup bowls are rarely included in standard place settings these days. But if you find a set you like in an antique or thrift shop, buy them. These little jewels are the perfect vessel for first-course bisques and veloutés. Oh, and while you're shopping antiques, look for pewter or silver porringers. These shallow, metal, one-handled bowls were the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century version of a soup or porridge bowl. Households held their porringers dear, and while you probably won't want to serve soup in yours, they're interesting conversation pieces and useful for holding croutons, nuts, and other garnishes.

For a fun splurge, buy kitschy, colorful soup mugs. These oversized coffee cups—with tops a little wider than most coffee mugs—are essential for casual entertaining where guests will be supping on

chili or chowder while mingling. They're also useful for cooks who occasionally like to curl up on the couch with a bowl of chicken soup and watch TV.

Any soup served on a table—that is, not in a ladle-and-carry soup mug—should have an under plate to catch spills and keep the hot bowl from sitting directly on the table. When serving Cioppino or another dish with seafood shells, you might want to add saucers for discarded shells.

Proper Flatware

Most households have place spoons included in their stainless or sterling flatware sets. Place spoons look just like teaspoons, only bigger. These have been used as all-purpose soup and stew spoons and work perfectly well—except for children who need smaller utensils.

Soup-specific spoons, sometimes called cream soup spoons, are only a little larger than teaspoons and have a perfectly round bowl. The same spoon in a larger size can be found in some silver patterns, and these are considered gumbo or chowder spoons.

Some Asian cultures avoid eating with metal utensils, believing the cold metal is unpleasant and imparts a metallic taste to the food. Purists use ceramic or plastic spoons with Asian soups. These are easy to find at import stores and can be a fun, authentic addition to a table setting.



Pairing wines with first-course soups isn't as tricky as it might seem. The classic pairings for broths and cream soups is a dry sherry or Madeira. If that seems a bit heavy, consider serving a dry, sparkling white wine with your bisque, chowder, or tortellini in broth. Heartier soups like vegetable beef and chicken and sausage gumbo need something with a little more body, like a light Pinot Noir or Merlot.

Since bread of some sort should be part of your soup course or stew entrée, a knife should always be included in the flatware service. Seafood forks must be available if your offering includes shellfish, still in the shell, and standard forks—as well as spoons—should be part of the table setting for any stew served over a starch such as rice or couscous.

Tureens

Soup tureens come in as many whimsical, fanciful, and beautiful designs as cookie jars. The covered ceramic or earthenware dishes keep soup warm and bring it to the table in style. Prices range from \$10 for plain white tureens to thousands of dollars for antique silver.

Smart hosts invest in one or two heat-safe tureens that can go into the oven to keep a soup or stew warm, if need be, before bringing it to the table. Shop for a low, wide-mouthed tureen with a notch for a silver or ceramic serving ladle. Your tureen should serve at least six people.

A Word about Safety

Don't use your soup or stew pot to try to revive ingredients you wouldn't want to eat otherwise.

Although leftovers make great soups, think in terms of the three-day rule. Add an ingredient to a soup no longer than three days after it has been cooked, and only if it has been properly stored in the refrigerator. If you can't get around to making soup within that window, just freeze the leftovers until you're ready to cook.

Once your chili, stew, soup, or broth has been prepared, allow it to cool to a warm temperature before placing it in the refrigerator. Otherwise, the dish could begin to cool on the outer edges, while the center of the soup or stew remains hot. That sets up a breeding ground for bacteria that could ruin your food. To cool a large batch of soup more quickly, ladle it into smaller containers or just stir the pot periodically to even out the food temperature and allow heat to escape.

Never allow any foods to stand at room temperature for more than two hours. And, serve or freeze your soup, stew, or chili within three days.

A World of Chicken Soup

Basic Chicken Broth

Asian Chicken Broth

Chicken, Barley, and Mushroom Soup

Mom's Chicken Noodle Soup

Pennsylvania Dutch Chicken Corn Soup

Chicken and Sausage Gumbo

Matzo Ball Soup

Kreplach Soup

Chicken Rice Soup

Chicken Tortilla Soup

Gnocchi in Chicken Broth

Tom Kha Gai (Thai Chicken Soup)

Avgolemono Soup

Italian Wedding Soup

Creamy Chicken Velouté

Cock-a-Leekie Soup

Mulligatawny Soup

Spanish Chicken and Ham Soup

Florentine Chicken Soup

German Chicken and Spaetzle

Creamy Chicken and Broccoli Soup

Chicken Artichoke Soup

Chicken, Wild Rice, and

Chanterelle Soup

Cheesy Chicken Corn Chowder

Basic Chicken Broth

For a more concentrated broth, return the liquid to the pot after straining. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the broth is reduced to half.

INGREDIENTS | SERVES 6

3 pounds chicken backs and necks or combination of chicken carcass and backs
2 ribs celery, coarsely chopped
2 carrots, coarsely chopped
2 medium onions, quartered
1 parsnip, coarsely chopped
1 sprig parsley
1 sprig thyme
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon kosher salt
10 peppercorns
½ teaspoon Angostura bitters
10 cups cold water

1. In a large soup pot, combine chicken pieces, vegetables, herbs, peppercorns, and bitters; cover with cold water. If water doesn't cover chicken and vegetables add more.
2. Bring water to a boil over high heat. Stir once, then reduce heat to medium. Cook 2 hours, skimming any foam that rises to top of pot. Reduce heat to medium low; continue to cook 2 hours, adding more water if needed. Remove from heat; let stand 20 minutes. Strain broth through a fine sieve; discard solids. Use broth as directed in recipes.

A Taste for Homemade

Homemade chicken broth can be an acquired taste. If you're accustomed to eating broth from a can or made from bouillon cubes, you'll find the homemade version to be much more subtle. Commercial broths have a lot of salt, flavor enhancers, and sometimes coloring added. Until you wean yourself from the store-bought broths, try adding a touch more salt to your homemade version and cooking it down to concentrate flavors.

Asian Chicken Broth

Soy sauce adds flavor to this broth, but it also adds a bit of caramel color. If you prefer a clear broth, omit the soy sauce.

INGREDIENTS | SERVES 6

1 recipe [Basic Chicken Broth](#)

1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger root

1 stalk lemongrass, chopped

1 teaspoon soy sauce (optional)

Pinch sugar

1. Place broth in a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add ginger root. Bruise lemongrass pieces with back of a knife; add to broth. Stir in soy sauce and sugar.
2. Bring broth to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer 20–30 minutes. Remove from heat. Strain broth into a bowl; discard solids. Use in place of regular chicken broth in recipes, as desired.

Chicken, Barley, and Mushroom Soup

Barley is a complex carbohydrate that adds body and texture to soups.

INGREDIENTS | SERVES 6

1 tablespoon butter or chicken fat
8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
2 garlic cloves, minced
8 cups chicken broth
1 rib celery, sliced
1 carrot, sliced
½ cup pearl barley
1½ cups diced or shredded chicken
Salt and pepper to taste
¼ cup minced parsley

1. In a large soup pot, heat butter over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms and garlic; sauté 5 minutes.
2. Pour in broth; add celery and carrot. Bring broth to a boil; stir in barley. Reduce heat to medium. Cover pot; simmer 40 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add chicken and simmer 5 minutes longer.
3. Add salt, pepper, and parsley; remove from heat. Let stand a few minutes before serving.

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