

# COOKING



By  
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## Cool down with soup

Research shows that a first course of soup can prevent overeating because it satisfies those first hunger pangs with less filling, less fattening food. My family loves soup as a first course on Shabbat, or, when it is thick and filled with beans and vegetables, as a main course throughout the winter. But once the first robin appears, they never ask for soup, and I rarely thought to make it until I began to collect recipes for summer soups.

I soon began to puree everything in sight. Melons and peaches, apricots with a hint of mint – I was in summer heaven making tons of icy cold fruit puree and adding all kinds of yogurts to make fruit into soup.

Make and eat fruit soups immediately as they don't stay fresh very long, maybe overnight. Veggie soups have longer staying power.

### Chilled Honeydew Soup With Lime and Midori (pareve or dairy)

One of my favorites, I serve it with yogurt for the kids and a bit of Midori (melon liqueur) and white wine for the adults.

- 1 large ripe honeydew melon
- 1/2 cup thawed limeade concentrate
- Juice from two fresh limes
- 1 cup unsweetened pineapple juice (more if desired)
- Variations:
- 1 cup vanilla yogurt
- 1/2 to 1 cup white or sparkling white wine
- 1/4 cup (more if desired) Midori liqueur

Cut the melon in half and scoop out about 8 small melon balls for garnish. Set aside. Remove the melon from the rind and cut the flesh into small pieces. Place the melon and the limeade and pineapple juice in a food processor or blender, and process until smooth. Transfer to a large mixing bowl, and add the yogurt or wine or Midori. (I like the Midori and yogurt together; my husband likes the sparkling wine.) Chill for several hours.

For a nice touch, place your serving bowl in the freezer for 15 minutes before serving. Garnish with the melon balls and small wedges of lime.

### Gazpacho With a Twist (pareve)

The twist here is the bread, which adds texture and thickens the soup. For a very different flavor, try using seedless rye bread or even black bread. Make this soup a few hours before serving to preserve the tart ripe flavor and crisp texture.

- 3 pounds ripe tomatoes
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
- 1/2 small Vidalia or sweet onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 slices French bread, crusts removed, 1/2 inch thick
- 2 cloves garlic, minced, more to taste
- 4-5 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons garlic wine vinegar, more or less to taste
- 1 teaspoon sugar (scant), to taste
- 1-3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, to taste

- Pinch salt
- Pinch white pepper
- 1 cup tomato juice

For Garnish:

- 1 cup garlic croutons
- 1 small cucumber, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 small Vidalia onion, finely chopped
- 1 red pepper, seeded and finely chopped

Place the green pepper in a food processor, and process until finely minced. Add the garlic and onion. Pulse a few times until finely minced.

Peel the tomatoes by dropping them, a few at a time, into a large pot of boiling water. When the skin splits, remove them with a slotted spoon and drop them into ice water. They will peel very easily. Cut the tomatoes in half and remove the core and some, but not all, of the seeds. Add them to the processor and process until smooth. Add the tomato juice then process until smooth.

Add the bread and process until smooth. Add the oil, vinegar, lemon juice, sugar, salt and pepper, and process again until you have the consistency you like, either smooth or chunky. Place in a large container and chill for several hours.

For a pretty dish, garnish with crispy garlic croutons and a tiny spoonful of each finely chopped veggie.

### Spicy Cold Plum Soup (dairy)

I got this from a veggie cookbook many years ago. I changed it a bit and came up with this adaptation that is tart and delicious. You can sweeten it a bit, if you like.

- 2 pounds VERY ripe purple plums
- 2 long strips orange zest (pull the zester around the entire orange)
- 1 cup fresh orange juice
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1/2 teaspoon cardamom
- 4 whole cloves
- 1/3 - 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup buttermilk or fat free plain or vanilla yogurt
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar

Cut the plums in half and place them in a pot with the orange zest, honey, sugar, juice and spices. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes or until the fruit comes off the pits easily. Transfer the fruit to a food mill and process over a large bowl. Remove the pits, cloves and cinnamon sticks, and process the plums, skins and all. Add the buttermilk or yogurt and chill. Just before serving, add the balsamic vinegar. Taste and adjust the seasonings or add more juice, milk or yogurt as needed. Add more sugar if the fruit is especially tart.

Variation: Add about 1/2 cup of a fruit wine such as peach or cherry.

Adapted from "Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone," by Deborah Madison (Broadway books).

### Chilled Fruit Borscht (pareve or dairy)

- 3-4 cups sliced very ripe Santa Rosa plums
- 3-4 cups fresh blueberries, rinsed and carefully picked over
- 1-2 cups raspberries, rinsed
- 2 cups dry red wine
- 2 cinnamon sticks, each about 3 inches long
- 6 whole cloves
- 2 whole allspice
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- Optional: 1/3 cup heavy cream for decoration/garnish
- Garnish:
- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup raspberries
- 1 plum, thinly sliced
- Lemon slices or mint sprigs

Place the sliced plums, blueberries, wine and sugar in a soup pot. Tie the cinnamon, cloves and allspice in a cheesecloth bag and place in the pot.

Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the fruit is soft, about 10-15 minutes. Keep the pot partially covered.

Discard the bag of spices. Ladle the soup in batches into the food processor or blender, and add some raspberries to each batch. Puree until very smooth.

Strain through a sieve, and press the solids to release as much pulp and juice as possible. Discard seeds and solids. Add the lemon juice, and add sugar to taste and water if necessary to thin. Place in a container and chill.

For a beautiful effect, ladle the soup into individual bowls. Gently spoon a small amount of cream into the center of each bowl. Use a thin knife and swirl the cream outwards from the center into a design. Garnish each bowl with a few of the reserved blueberries and raspberries. Also garnish with a few plum slices and a lemon slice or mint sprig.

Adapted from Nicole Routhier's "Fruit Cookbook" (Workman Publishing)

### Cold Leek and Potato Soup (dairy)

This soup tastes great the next day, making meal planning easy. It is mild enough for kids to like. You can serve it for them in mugs. Serve with crème fraiche or sour cream.

- 1 pound potatoes, peeled and cubed (California Long Whites work well)
- 4 leeks, about 3-4 inches of white, trimmed, cleaned and chopped
- 5 shallots, minced
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 7 cups vegetable stock
- 1 cup sour cream, crème fraiche, plain yogurt or sour half-and-half
- Snipped fresh chives for garnish

Place the potatoes in a saucepan, cover with the vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15-20 minutes, until the potatoes are soft.

Meanwhile, place the butter in a sauté pan and add the shallots. Add the leeks and sauté for about 5 minutes.

When the potatoes are barely soft, add the leeks and shallots to the potatoes, and cook for another 10-15 minutes, until all the vegetables are soft. Add salt and pepper, and let cool for a few minutes.

Process the soup in a blender or processor, adding more stock or water if the soup is too thick. Add half the sour cream and whisk to blend. Taste and adjust salt and pepper. Chill until cold.

To serve: Pour into bowl (chilled bowls adds a nice touch), add a dollop of the sour cream and sprinkle on some fresh chives.

### Tomato (Juice) Soup (dairy)

I had this at a very elegant bridal shower. It was served in crystal glasses with a tiny wedge of lime on each glass. The hostess generously shared the recipe with me, and I have served it often to rave reviews.

- 6 cups tomato juice
- 1/2 small can tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Grated peel of 1/2 lemon
- 1/2 teaspoon curry powder (or to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper (or to taste)
- 1/3 cup scallions, minced
- 3/4-1 cup sour cream (low fat or fat-free is OK, but the taste is a little different)
- Note: This can easily be doubled or triples for a crowd.

Blend all ingredients except sour cream in a blender. Season to taste. Chill completely. Just before serving, whisk in sour cream. Garnish with a few pieces of chopped scallion and a dollop of sour cream. Serve with crusty bread (or, as in my house, bagels and cream cheese) and perhaps cold pasta salad. It also makes a great first course for a summer company dairy meal.

Note: This does not work as well with yogurt.

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# PARENTING



By  
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## Judaism, by baby steps

My 4-month-old baby boy nestled in my arms, I walked into the sanctuary hoping to discreetly slip back into a seat by my husband.

"Simon," Rabbi Howard Jaffe called out in his booming voice. "Come join us."

It was time for the Aleinu prayer, and our temple's tradition was to invite children to participate and open the doors of the ark.

Take my baby up to the bimah? What was the point?

Rabbi Jaffe smiled and beckoned us forward. My husband joined me as I carried Simon to the bimah. The cantor held onto one of Simon's tiny hands as my baby looked around with wide eyes. Simon reached out to touch the ark as I opened it. He grinned and his eyes widened even more at the sight of a trio of Torahs and their shiny adornments, silver breast plates and crowns.

We sang Aleinu with the rabbi, cantor and two other children at the bimah, our voices rising in volume toward the end. Startled, Simon wailed. A moment later, he was smiling again. He exchanged grins with cooing admirers on the way back to our seats.

What was the point? There was, I later realized, a big point. With a simple gesture, Rabbi Jaffe taught me how to make Judaism a natural part of my son's childhood. As a baby, Simon participated in a Jewish practice. He was getting something I never had during childhood: regular exposure to ritual.

As a child, I did not attend Shabbat services because my family did not. Temple was a place where I was always bored, and at age 12, I became a Sunday school dropout. As a young adult, I understood little when I set foot in a temple. I remained largely disconnected from Judaism until well into my 30s.

By the time Simon was born, I was in a very different place. I no longer felt like a stranger within my own faith. Two years before my son's birth, I celebrated my adult bat mitzvah. I studied Hebrew for more than a year and began to understand the meaning behind Jewish prayers and ritual. Shabbat started to become something beautiful and magical. When I became a mother, I wanted my child to grow up loving Judaism. And I wanted him to feel from the start that he belonged.

Rabbi Jaffe told me that he invited Simon to the bimah because it is never too early for children to participate in Jewish

ritual. Simon, now 2 years old, is a regular fixture at our synagogue, Temple Isaiah in Lexington. He likes toddling up the steps to the bimah and being there as the ark opens. We regularly take him to Tot Shabbats, and his high voice often rings out during Shabbat Shalom and Hine Ma Tov.

As a family, we attend Shabbat services once or twice a month. My husband – who also grew up in a non-religious home – and I try in small ways to bring Shabbat into our home. We frequently light candles on Friday nights and buy challah for the occasion.

The first time we lit candles, Simon shouted out in excitement: "Birthday! Birthday candles!" We laughed. "No, Simon," I said, "It's Shabbat." Now, he exclaims, "Shabbat," whenever we light candles. He sings as we chant the blessings over the lights and bread and warbles whatever words he can catch on the nights when we decide to linger at the table and sing a little more.

Rabbi Jaffe continues to be a regular influence on our son. At a recent Tot Shabbat service, Simon hovered near the table with the tzedekah boxes set out for the youngsters. I gave him a few coins. He put them in the box then looked at me as if to ask for more coins. Standing just to the side of us, Rabbi Jaffe pulled out a hand-

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ful of change and then let Simon pluck out coins one by one. No words were exchanged. None were needed. The rabbi once again made a huge connection to our son. I do not remember the names of the rabbis of my youth. They were shadowy figures who preached from afar. Simon already is having a much different experience. Rabbis and cantors have become another set of meaningful, caring adults in his life.

A week ago, we drove to temple to drop off brownies for an upcoming event. Simon grinned and shouted, "Shabbat!" as we arrived. It was Thursday. But his squeal of delight thrilled me.

Our son is early in his childhood, and going to temple makes him smile rather than complain. Each moment, whether it's on the bimah next to a rabbi or not, is making a difference. Will his enthusiasm continue for years to come? I can only hope.

Linda K. Wertheimer, a former education writer for The Boston Globe, is writing a memoir on journeying through grief and getting closer to the Jewish faith. In the Jewish Muse blog, jewishmuse.com, she writes regularly about faith and family. Contact her at Linda@linda.kwertheimer.com.