

Soup of the (Potato) Day

The three rules for good homemade soup are:

1. Use good quality veg, it's not an excuse to get rid of the stuff that's going off – seasonal is best.
2. Use good stock. Make your own – bones for meat stock, rescued from the roast or bought especially (they are cheap) & veg trimmings and herbs otherwise.

(for the Potato Day soup I made a vegetable stock with the outside stringy stalks of celery, some odd shaped carrots, the ends trimmed off some leeks, a couple of onions (leave the inner brown skin on for some colour), a few bay leaves, some fresh thyme and parsley stalks (the leaves went in the soup). Just simmer for an hour.)

3. Most good soups start with some alliums – these need sautéing to bring out the flavour and soften them before liquid is added otherwise you get chewy chunks of onion. Celery, peppers, fennel etc are also better fried off a bit first.

If I was making over a gallon of soup, and I rarely measure or weigh out, so the rest is an approximation. So, for about 4 people:

Chop 1 large or 2 small onions (small and neat if you are going to have a textured soup or any old how if you are going to liquidise it).

Add to a 2/3 tablespoons of rape seed oil in a pan and fry gently.

Mince, grate or crush as much garlic as you can cope with and add to the pan (I used a lot!).

Continue frying until the mix is soft, translucent but not browned.

Add 2/3 handfuls of peeled and diced potato, any spud suitable for boiling/mashing will do. You don't have to peel, it's an appearance thing and will depend on the potato – some peels cook down with the flesh, others are more tenacious and hang around in unattractive grey strands

Fry for a bit then add your hot stock – see above – about a litre will do. If you need to use a cube splash out a bit on one that actually has some veg in it. Please read the ingredient list – many are mostly salt and hydrolysed protein.

Simmer until the potato is cooked, soft and breaking up.

Add a generous handful of finely chopped parsley, liquidise if you want, and serve.

Contributed by Paul Niblock #nibbonosh