Harrison County

Homemade Vegetable Soup 101

There is nothing like a bowl or cup of homemade soup to warm the body and knock off the chill of winter. Homemade soups can also be a great addition to a healthy food plan.

Ingredients

Let’s start with the star of the show: vegetables. You can use fresh, frozen or canned vegetables. They are all nutritious.

Which vegetables to use?
That list is as varied as the people making the soup but most people would agree on some core vegetables: green beans, carrots, corn and onions. From there you can add anything you like such as tomatoes, celery, cabbage, lima beans, kidney beans, black beans, turnip greens, zucchini, black-eyed peas, etc.

What meat to add?
The most common meats used are beef or chicken but you can use any meat you like. You can start with fresh meat or use leftover cooked meat or canned meat. Here’s a thought: no meat at all – all vegetable. If you use black-eyed peas, lima beans, kidney beans, red beans, chick peas and such, they are great protein sources and meat substitutes.

When using fresh meat, you can use ground beef, steak strips, stew meat, chicken pieces or chicken tenderloins. Turkey also works well in soups. If using ground meats, I would recommend that you cook the meat first and drain well to cut down on the fat in the soup.

What are Soup Stretchers?
Most folds add some source of starch to stretch the soup or simply to add a little more comfort food to the mix. Potatoes, rice, spaghetti, noodles, macaroni and orzo all make good additions to soup. They blend well with the vegetables and are best when added raw and cooked in the soup stock.

How do you make the soup stock?
That’s the easy part. After you cook the meat, you simply add some water and then the vegetables. The juices from the meat mix with the vegetable juices and the base for your stock is born. If you want, you can also start with or add beef, chicken or vegetable broth. I like to use the vegetable broth, especially if I am not using meat. It is hard to beat a cup of just vegetable soup and a grilled cheese sandwich.
Here are the steps for Homemade Vegetable Soup.

**Step 1:**
**Select your ingredients.** Wash and cut fresh vegetables and meats to desired shapes and sizes. Frozen vegetables can be added frozen. Canned vegetables can be used with the liquid in the can.

**Step 2:**
**Brown the meat.** Use salt and pepper to taste. Drain if needed to remove fat.

**Step 3:**
**Add water or broth** to large pan where meat was cooked to make stock.

**Step 4:**
**Add vegetables.** Season with salt, pepper and herbs as desired. Let soup cook until flavors blend, anywhere from 30 minutes up to 2 hours. **Hint:** Use a lid on the pan to capture all the wonderful flavors of the vegetables and help the soup to cook quicker.

**Step 5:**
**Add pasta, potatoes, rice, orzo, noodles, macaroni and/or spaghetti about 20 minutes before the soup is ready.** You don’t want to overcook them as they will fall apart or get gummy. Don’t forget to account for some extra stock/broth since these ingredients will absorb some of it.

ENJOY A BOWL OR CUP OF SOUP!!

Here’s the final question: **How thick should the soup be?**

That is a personal preference. Some people like thin soup with lots of stock and others like soup loaded with vegetables and meat, almost a stew consistency. There is no right or wrong thickness.

**Nancy’s Note:** Experiment with what ingredients you like. It’s just soup! You can’t go wrong! Great project for an inexperienced cook or old time fun for an experienced cook.

For more information, contact:

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