

### *Wholesome Vegetarian Soups*

**T**O THOSE WHO HAVE become accustomed to soups as a necessary adjunct to dinner, and who believe that meats or their liquors are essential to produce a savory soup, it will doubtless be a revelation to learn how palatable a dish can be made from natural vegetation. While we do not recommend soups specifically, we realize that in changing from a meat to a fleshless diet, beginners must be granted a measure of latitude to obviate the possibility of backsliding to former injudicious dietetic practices.

The use of wholesome vegetable soups is not to be condemned, if care is exercised in eating them. In order to promote digestion, and to preserve the integrity of the teeth, our food should be taken in a hard or solid consistency, exactly the opposite from that of soup. The objectionable effects of the soup habit, however, may be partially overcome by sipping them slowly with some hard cracker or toasted bread that requires thorough mastication, or any raw vegetable such as radishes, celery stalks, sliced turnips or sliced rutabagas. Extreme care must be exercised at all times never to serve as a side dish those vegetables in a raw state which appear in the soup in a cooked state. Where tomatoes are incorporated in the soup, raw vegetables are best as nibblers, as starchy foods do not combine harmoniously with acid-type vegetables.

The more liquid that is taken into the stomach with meals, the more difficult it is for the food to digest, for the liquid must be absorbed first to prevent too much dilution of the digestive juices. Consequently, the most perfect hygiene in the use



*Tofu Mushroom Lemongrass Soup*

of soups calls for a few sips only at the beginning of the meal, which in some cases stimulates the flow of the digestive juices. Soups make an excellent commencement to a meal for those who are apt to overload the stomach, as it quickly satisfies and prevents overindulgence of the appetite. Persons suffering from acidity of the stomach, slow digestion, and those troubled with flatulency should partake sparingly of soup.

With a hearty dinner of other foods, a small portion of some light soup or broth should be served, while a legume soup, a chowder, or a puree may make the principal dish of the meal. Vegetable Chowders and purees are not soups in the strictest sense. For instance, a chowder is often of the consistency of a stew, with a small proportion of liquid while a puree is a kind of pulpy maceration of legumes, vegetables, etc., which have been pressed through a fine colander. Both of these may be pre-

pared with a larger proportion of liquid and served as thick soups. Vegetable bouillons or consommés are broths. Thick soup or puree is better suited to the winter season; vegetarians, as a rule, prefer soups, broths, and gruels that are thick. A clear soup is a beverage rather than a food and should be so regarded.

In preparing soup, it is often recommended to remove any skins or cellulose materials from vegetables, exclusive of celery and oyster plant. None the less, mastication in connection with soups is an aid to their digestion and makes them more satisfying. The coarse knife of the food chopper may be utilized to advantage in preparing vegetables for soups. As a rule, use oyster plant in slices, one-quarter inch thick in the largest part and a little thicker towards the end. But if it is desired fine, it is best to grind before cooking; in this way it retains its characteristic flavor. Corn kernels should first be crushed in a pan or ground through a food cutter; then a very little at a time they may be pressed through a colander.

In making soups, soft water is better than is hard water. Vegetables cooked in hard water are rendered hard and indigestible. This is especially the case with legumes, as the calcium in water, when boiled, forms hard indigestible compounds with the legumin, causing flatulency. If the water used for cooking is hard, due to the presence of calcium carbonate, one teaspoonful of baking soda per gallon may be added, and then boiled and cooled before using, in order that the calcium carbonate or lime may precipitate.

It is economical to keep always a quantity of consomme or bouillon on hand for soups or sauces. The water in which vegetables are boiled is extremely useful and nutritious, and homemakers make a mistake in discarding it. When cauliflower, carrots, turnips, onions, celery, beans, macaroni, etc., are boiled, the water in which they were cooked should be saved and used as stock for

vegetable soup. Indeed the fluids from nearly all greens are desirable in soups. Especially is the water from spinach an invaluable addition to vegetable soups; with the addition of cream, thick creamed nut butter or soy bean milk, it alone makes a delightful broth.

There is scarcely a soup that appears at the table that cannot be reproduced in harmony with vegetarian standards.

Soups should vary with the seasons. Whatever vegetables are available may go into the pot. Soups are endless and a person inclined to exercise ingenuity might produce a new one every day of the year.

In combining materials, care must be taken to unite only such ingredients as harmonize in taste. The most inexpensive vegetables on the markets—even the stalks, tops, and stumps so often thrown away—have only to be picked over carefully and washed to make them available for use in a palatable and nourishing soup. Celery roots, stalks, leaves, or

seed give a fine flavor. Not only are they full of flavor, but many of the precious salts abound in their outer leaves. Peels of many roots, too coarse to eat, as well as nearly all grains are welcome contributions to soup, and if desired they may be seasoned with herbs. If whole grain macaroni or vermicelli are intended for use in soup, they should be well cooked separately, then added.

It is suggested to use potatoes seldom in anything but potato soups. The addition of potatoes to an otherwise wholesome soup might convert it into a fermentable combination, as well as remove it from the diet of those who cannot use starchy foods. Starch is not desirable in the presence of proteins, nor should acid-type vegetables like tomatoes and rhubarb be consumed with or incorporated in starchy soups. As the flavor of turnips is often disagreeable in soups, it is best to accustom oneself to grate or slice them raw. Herbs such as mint and thyme should be used sparingly. A little stewed asparagus, if liked, adds much to any



*Lentil and Greens Soup*

vegetable soup or chowder. Dried mushrooms washed well, soaked two to four hours, and simmered for five minutes; then cut fine and added with their juice, give a fine flavor to many soups. Three or four small pieces are sufficient for one and one-half to two quarts of soup. Meatless vegetable extract paste lends the needed zest and palatability to otherwise bland dishes.

The nutritive value of soup depends of course upon the deft selection and combination of ingredients. A pint of cold mashed potatoes, a few stewed beans, bits of whole rice, stewed tomatoes and other vegetables or grains left over at meal time form excellent material for the next day's soup. Discretion must be exercised by using but one of the above suggested left-overs at a time with such compatible vegetables as are available in season. A pleasant and nutritious soup can be prepared with lentils and water, with the possible addition of onions, carrots, or celery to contribute to its alkalinity. Lentils need but to be washed and soaked well, then boiled steadily for three or four hours. Liquor from butter-beans, lentils, etc., provides a good basis for thick soups.

For those unwilling to yield too many points to vegetarianism, milk, eggs, and butter may be used where indicated in soup recipes. High heat and quick boiling are enemies of good soup; it should be simmered very slowly until it is done. As much of the essence escapes by evaporation, a lid should always be used. Soups should never be stored in a metal vessel. While reheating does develop richer flavors in foods, retention of surplus quantities of soup is not altogether to be condoned. High degrees of heat, if sufficiently prolonged and repeated, destroy the life principle by demolishing the highly intricate molecular structure upon which vegetative life depends.

The conventional method of thickening soup with flour heated in oil, fat, or butter might well be replaced by more hygienic methods. Okra, fresh or

canned, as well as in a dried and pulverized consistency contributes the needed bulk through release of its mucilaginous content. Indeed, the incorporation of any of the dried powdered vegetables yields the necessary thickening by virtue of their capacity to absorb moisture. Raw nut butters may be added to any of the combinations of vegetables in the proportion of one to two tablespoons to each quart of soup. The water drained from boiled peanuts may be used in place of raw nut butters, taking care not to use too much. Evaporated dairy milk or soy bean milk imparts just the needed creamy

smoothness. Soy bean milk-powder dissolved in cooled soup (to prevent lumps) to the consistency of a milk also lends wholesome sustenance and body. Flaxseed meal well stirred into hot soup is especially recommended as a hygienic and nutritious contributor of bulk and lubrication.

Such sea vegetation as agar-agar and Irish Moss furnish bulk by the expansion of their cellulose. Agar and deodorized Irish Moss are tasteless and odorless nondrying material, clinging to water with great tenacity. Versatile in their scope, agar and Irish Moss lend themselves also to jelling needs. For this reason soups embodying them may congeal to some degree when cooled; reheating, with added water where necessary, quickly breaks up any solidification, however.

Whole cooked barley, dried sweet corn (in winter), or shredded or diced canned meat-substitutes present just a few of the never-ending varieties of novel and invigorating thickening agents to incorporate into soups, when one comes in hungry and shivering on a blustery day. Indeed the artful use of warm non-flesh dishes like soups prevents many, during a transitional period, from falling by the wayside and from returning to the less wholesome piping hot culinary elaborations of conventional fare. □

—Lillian R. Carque



*Lentil Onion Soup*