

## **Beau-ootiful Soo-oop!**

Delicious Soup and Crockpot Recipes to Warm Your Winter Months  
From Boulder County Home & Garden Magazine  
by Felicia Russell & Charmaine Ortega Getz

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Photo by Alan Egginton

*“Beautiful soup! Who cares for fish, Game or any other dish?” Those words from Alice in Wonderland are especially true in winter. These warming soups from local chefs and caterers are easy to prepare and sure to please.*

Here's a riddle for you: What warms you in winter, cools you in summer, can be reincarnated, and tastes better on the second day?

Soup. And for many of us, it's the perfect wintertime meal.

“From a very young age we're programmed to think of soup when winter comes along,” says Danielle Edmonds, Cooking Studio facilitator at Whole Foods in Belmar.

Edmonds remembers her mother scouring the refrigerator and cupboards at the end of each week for past-prime ingredients that were still good enough for soup. Although Edmonds' mom rarely used a recipe, she had an idea of the proportions: fill 1/4 of the pot with carrots, celery and onions in a 1:1:2 ratio, add a healthy serving of meat, and cover it all with water or stock.

Dan Witherspoon, owner, cooking consultant and chef of The Gourmet Spoon in Denver, says soup is “a great simple meal—when someone else is making it.” When Witherspoon had to prepare 15 gallons of soup five days a week as a young chef, it was a lot of work. However, he often reminds his students “it takes as long to make a half-batch of soup as it does 3 gallons.” And because soup keeps in the freezer for two to three months, a little extra work means a quick, easy meal when you're too tired to cook.

Sue Dubach, owner of Sage & Savory Catering in Boulder, loves to dine on a warm bowl of soup in winter. And she often turns leftover tomato or cream-based soups into sauces for pastas or meats by reducing the soup and adding fresh ingredients. She also likes to jazz up leftovers with garnishes, like homemade cinnamon croutons, which are particularly good on potato-sausage soup, she says.

Making soup is simple and satisfying, especially when you follow these tips from expert chefs:

1. **Use good, sharp knives.** All you need is a 10-inch French knife and a 3-inch paring knife.
2. **Start with high temperatures**, then reduce heat to let the flavors meld.
3. **Cook pasta and grains separately**, put them in the soup bowl first and cover them with hot soup.
4. **Get your pot hot**, then heat the oil and sauté veggies and herbs *al dente* before adding liquids.
5. **Work backward**, starting with the ingredients that need the longest cooking time.
6. **Never forget the onions!**

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## Soup's On!

When you've had enough of chilly nights, try these warming soups.

### Curried Butternut Squash Soup with Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

—*Sue Dubach, Sage & Savory Catering*

4 Tbs. unsalted butter  
4 large shallots, minced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 Tbs. curry powder  
2 1/2 lbs. butternut squash, peeled and cubed  
4 cups chicken or vegetable stock  
Fresh ground pepper, to taste  
Kosher or sea salt, to taste

Heat large stockpot and melt the butter. Add shallots and garlic. Cook over medium heat 3-5 minutes. Add curry and cook 1 minute. Add squash and toss with shallot mixture. Turn heat to low, cover and cook until squash is tender (about 30-40 minutes), stirring occasionally. Add stock and simmer 10-15 minutes. Remove 1/4 of the squash and reserve it in a bowl. Puree remaining stock and squash mixture in a blender or food processor. Add un-pureed squash back to soup. Season with salt and pepper. Top with roasted red pepper sauce (below) and serve immediately.

### **Roasted Red Pepper Sauce**

1 Tbs. olive oil  
1 red pepper, roasted, peeled and diced  
1 shallot, minced  
2 Tbs. cream, optional  
Heat skillet to medium-high heat. Add olive oil and red pepper and sauté 3-4 minutes. Add shallot and sauté 1 minute. Turn heat to low, add cream and cook 5 minutes. Puree the sauce in a blender or food processor. Sauce can be prepared a day ahead.

### **French Onion Soup**

—*Danielle Edmonds, Whole Foods Cooking Studio*

1/4 cup unsalted butter  
4-5 lbs. Colorado sweet onions, peeled and thinly sliced  
1 Tbs. garlic, finely minced  
1/4 cup red wine  
1 quart chicken broth  
1 quart beef broth  
Dry sherry, to taste  
Balsamic vinegar, to taste  
Kosher salt, to taste  
White pepper, to taste  
1 French baguette,  
sliced 1/2-inch thick  
1 cup Gruyère cheese, grated

In a stockpot, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add onions, mix well and caramelize, about 35 to 45 minutes. Add garlic and cook for one minute, stirring constantly. Add red wine and scrape the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon to remove anything stuck to the pot. Add broths and bring to a boil. Lower temperature and simmer until mixture reduces by half. Season with dry sherry, balsamic vinegar, and salt and pepper.

Place four to six French baguette slices on a baking sheet and cover with Gruyère cheese. Cook in the oven until cheese is browned. Serve soup in warm bowls with a cheese crouton on top.



Photo by Olga Lyubkina

### **Butternut Squash Purée with Fresh Ginger and Sautéed Apples**

—*The Gourmet Spoon*

Serves 6-8

- 1/2 cup safflower oil
- 2 Tbs. fresh ginger, minced
- 1 onion, peeled and sliced
- 1 leek, white part only, well washed and sliced
- 3 stalks celery, well washed and sliced
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 2 lbs. butternut squash, peeled, seeded and roughly chopped

6 cups chicken stock, more if needed  
salt, to taste  
Nutmeg, to taste  
White pepper, to taste  
2 bulbs fresh ginger, peeled and julienned  
3 apples, peeled, split, seeded and diced  
4 Tbs. crème fraîche

Heat 2 tablespoons of the safflower oil in a six-quart saucepot over medium heat. Add the 2 tablespoons minced ginger, onion, leek and celery. Sweat the vegetables without browning. Add the white wine and bring to a boil. Reduce until the liquid is no longer runny. Add the squash, chicken stock and seasonings. Bring back to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook 20 minutes until squash is very tender.

Purée in a blender or food processor, adjust seasonings and strain, if desired. Return to saucepot.

In a small saucepot, heat 1/4 cup safflower oil over medium heat. When hot, drop one sliver of julienned ginger in the pot. It should immediately begin to fry. If not, let the oil heat 1 or 2 minutes more. Add the rest of the ginger to the oil and fry quickly, 10 to 20 seconds, until ginger is light golden brown. Remove with a slotted spoon or skimmer and drain on paper towels.

In a 10-inch sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the safflower oil over medium heat. Add the diced apples and sauté until tender. Add to soup.

To serve, ladle soup into bowls and garnish with crème fraîche and fried ginger.

### **Albondigas Soup with Minted Meatballs and Fried Tortilla Strips**

—*The Gourmet Spoon*

Serves 8

1 lb. lean ground beef or buffalo  
1/4 cup bread crumbs  
1/4 cup minced onion  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 Tbs. fresh mint, stemmed and chopped  
1 Tbs. good-quality chili powder  
1 tsp. ground cumin salt, to taste  
2 eggs  
3 Tbs. olive oil  
1 large red onion, diced  
1 1/2 quarts chicken broth or stock  
1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes

2 tsp. dried oregano  
2 carrots, peeled and diced  
2 stalks celery, washed and diced  
2 cups cooked white rice  
1 1/2 tsp. fresh cilantro, chopped, for garnish  
1 1/2 Tbs. fresh mint, chopped, for garnish  
1 lime, cut into 8 wedges, for garnish

In a large mixing bowl, blend together the meat, bread crumbs, minced onion, garlic, mint, chili powder, cumin, salt and eggs. When blended, form the mixture into small meatballs, approximately an inch in diameter. Heat a large skillet and when hot, add half of the olive oil and the meatballs. Turning frequently, lightly brown the meatballs as evenly as possible, about 5 minutes. Remove the meatballs and set aside.

If needed, add the remaining olive oil to the skillet and add the red onion. Cook until soft, but not brown, approximately 2 to 3 minutes. Add the stock, tomatoes, oregano, carrot and celery. Bring to a simmer and add the meatballs. Skim off any foam that appears on the surface. Allow soup to simmer over medium-low heat until the vegetables are tender and the meatballs are firm, approximately 15 minutes. Stir in the cooked rice and bring back to a simmer.

To serve, ladle the soup into large soup bowls and garnish with the fresh cilantro, fresh mint and lime wedges. Soup is at its best if the lime is squeezed into the soup at the last minute. Serve with fried tortilla strips (recipe below).

### **Fried Tortilla Strips**

2 cups cooking oil  
6 corn tortillas  
salt

In a large saucepot, heat the oil to 350° F. Cut the tortillas into thin strips, approximately 2 inches long and 1/8 inch wide. When the oil is hot, add a third of the tortilla strips and fry until the tortillas become firm, stirring occasionally and gently. Remove with a wire skimmer and place on paper towels to drain. Immediately season strips with salt while the tortillas are still hot. Repeat the process with the remaining strips. Add strips to the soup before serving or put them in a bowl and let guests add their own amounts.



Photo by Brenda Carson

**Southwestern Black Bean Corn Soup with Cilantro Pesto and Cumin-Lime-Aioli  
Croutons**

—*The Gourmet Spoon*

Serves 6

1 Tbs. olive oil  
1 1/2 cups assorted colored bell peppers, diced  
1 Anaheim pepper, seeded and diced  
1 cup yellow onions, diced  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 cups black beans, cooked and rinsed (can substitute precooked canned black beans)  
1 cup corn kernels  
1 Tbs. chili powder  
6 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
4 Tbs. lime juice  
salt and pepper, to taste



In a large sauté pan, add 1 tablespoon olive oil and bring to high heat. Add the peppers, onions and garlic, and sauté until softened. Add the black beans, corn and chili powder, and stir well. Add the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer and cook approximately 10 minutes. Add the lime juice, salt and pepper, and stir. Adjust the seasonings. Cover until ready to serve.

### **Cilantro Pesto**

2 cloves garlic  
2 Tbs. roasted pine nuts  
3 Tbs. grated Asiago cheese  
1 bunch fresh cilantro, washed and stemmed  
salt and pepper, to taste  
2-4 Tbs. olive oil

Place garlic, pine nuts and Asiago cheese in a food processor. Pulse-grind until well broken up. Place cilantro in a blender and chop well. Add garlic mix, salt and pepper, and blend slightly. Place contents in a bowl. Stir in olive oil with a rubber spatula until smooth. May be made up to 2 days in advance.

### **Cumin-Lime-Aioli Croutons**

1 1/2 cups olive oil, approximately  
1 small garlic head  
1 tsp. cumin seeds  
3 egg yolks  
2 Tbs. lime juice  
salt and Tabasco, to taste  
1 Tbs. fresh oregano, minced  
20 slices fresh baguette, 3/8-inches thick

Preheat oven to 350° F. Remove loose outer leaves from the garlic head and cut off the top quarter. Place garlic in a small, thick-bottomed pan and top with 1 teaspoon of the olive oil. Cover with a lid or aluminum foil and place in the oven. Cook 35-45 minutes until soft to the touch. Let cool. Squeeze the cloves from the head on to a cutting board. Mash and chop finely with a knife until the cloves become a paste. Put in a small bowl and set aside.

Heat a small skillet to medium high. Add the cumin seeds and dry sauté until seeds turn 1 shade darker, approximately 20 seconds. Remove immediately and set aside.

In a medium mixing bowl, place the egg yolks, lime juice, salt and Tabasco, and whip approximately 1 minute until the mixture is slightly thickened. Continue to whip rapidly and slowly add olive oil until the mixture becomes very thick. Adjust seasonings and add as much or as little of the garlic paste in accordance with your taste preference. Mix in



the toasted cumin seeds and fresh oregano. Transfer to a serving bowl. If not used immediately, cover and refrigerate up to three days.

Lay the baguette slices on a sheet tray and place in the oven to toast, approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Remove when light brown and let cool.

Just prior to serving, spread a small amount of garlic paste on each crouton. Place the croutons back in the oven for 2 to 3 minutes until warm.

To assemble, ladle 8 to 10 ounces of soup into six bowls. Place 1 tablespoon of cilantro pesto into the center of each bowl and arrange the croutons around the pesto. Serve immediately.

### **Mediterranean Fish Stew**

—*The Gourmet Spoon*

1 2 cup water  
1 large pinch saffron threads  
8 oz. red snapper fillets or other white fish  
1-2 Tbs. olive oil  
1 yellow onion, finely chopped  
1 large leek (white part only), diced  
3 large garlic cloves, minced 2 stalks celery, trimmed and diced  
1 medium fennel bulb, cored and thinly sliced  
1 2 cup white wine  
1 lb. tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped  
1 tsp. fennel seeds  
3 cups fish stock (or 1 2 cups clam juice mixed with 1 2 cups water)  
1 Tbs. tomato paste Salt, to taste  
Freshly ground pepper, to taste  
8 oz. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined  
8 oz. medium scallops, tendon removed  
2 Tbs. fresh parsley, chopped

Bring 1 2 cup water to boil. Remove from heat and add the saffron threads. Set aside; allow saffron to steep. Rinse snapper fillets under cold water; pat dry with paper towels. Cut the fish into 1-inch cubes, removing any bones. Place fish in a small mixing bowl and toss with the saffron water.

Heat a large stockpot on high heat. When hot, add the olive oil. When oil is hot, add the onion and leek, stirring occasionally, until the onion is fully cooked without browning (about 2 minutes). Add garlic, celery and fennel and cook until the celery starts to soften (about 2 minutes). Add the wine and bring to a boil. Cook until the wine is almost evaporated (about 2 minutes).

Drain saffron water off the fish (set fish aside) and add the water to the stockpot, along with the tomatoes, fennel seeds, fish stock and tomato paste. Stir well and bring to a boil. Season with salt and pepper and reduce to a simmer. Skim off surface foam and cook uncovered until all vegetables are softened (about 10 minutes). Adjust seasonings to taste. (At this point, the stew may be stored in the refrigerator for up to three days.)

When ready to serve, add the diced fish, shrimp and scallops and bring heat back to medium. Cook until fish is firm (2-3 minutes). Ladle the stew into serving bowls and garnish with chopped parsley.

Serve immediately.

*The Gourmet Spoon is a Denver-based culinary instruction and consulting firm that offers private cooking classes, workshops and team-building events. For information, call 303-394-0167 or visit [www.thegourmetspoon.com](http://www.thegourmetspoon.com).*

## **Crockpot Recipes**

Few things say “welcome home!” like the aroma of homemade soup simmering for hours. But with today’s busy lifestyles, it’s more likely to be a whiff of something microwaved—unless you have a crockpot. Today’s models come in 1-pint minis to 7-quart behemoths (for best results, be sure the pot is at least half full).

Newer crockpot features include a delayed start option, timers, a keep-warm setting, and removable liners for easy cleanup. (Older crockpots may need to be turned on high to cook properly.)

—Charmaine Ortega Getz

### **Sweet ’n’ Sour Borscht**

—Nina Judd, Boulder

2 lbs. beef, cut into small chunks (or short ribs)  
2 quarts water  
2 lbs. cabbage, chopped  
12 prunes, pitted  
2 lemons, juice only  
1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes  
2 apples, chopped  
1 large onion, chopped  
Salt, to taste  
Fresh ground pepper, to taste  
Brown sugar, to taste

Cover beef with water and simmer one hour on medium setting. Skim off fat. Add remaining ingredients and stir well. Cook on low to medium setting until meat is tender

(about an hour). Add more lemon or sugar, if needed, for desired balance of sweet and sour.

### **Daal Gosht**

—*Roma Melrose, Royal Bengal Kitchen Catering*

1 cup water  
1 cup yellow lentils  
2 lbs. lamb, cut into small chunks  
1 large onion, sliced  
1 cinnamon stick  
1 lemon, juice only  
2 bay leaves  
4 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 2-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and grated  
1 2 tsp. whole peppercorns, crushed  
1 2 tsp. cumin seeds, ground  
1 tsp. coriander seeds, ground  
1 tsp. turmeric powder  
Fresh mint leaves or cilantro to garnish

Turn crockpot on low setting, put all ingredients inside, stir and cover. When lamb is done, remove bay leaves. Serve garnished with mint leaves or cilantro.



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