

SOUPS FOR SPRING.



SPRING soup, as its name almost implies, is simply good clear stock in which almost every young vegetable that exists may be served. Of course one important point for consideration is how best to enable these bright young

vegetables to retain their colour. It is obvious to any one that, even were the flavour the same, yellow-looking peas would be far inferior to those that are a bright green. Yet it will be found that many cooks who succeed admirably in preparing good stock somehow fail to attain success in this respect, notwithstanding the old-fashioned idea of boiling a copper penny in the water. First, what vegetables shall we choose? I think any or all of the following: young carrots, turnips, peas, small spring onions without any stalk, asparagus-tops, cauliflowers, cabbage-lettuces, and last but not least, thin slices of the white part of celery.

The great secret of boiling all vegetables is to throw them into boiling water, in which salt has been mixed, say in the proportion of a brimming salt-spoonful to half a gallon. These young vegetables—after, of course, being thoroughly washed—must be parboiled in this boiling water before being put into the stock. Another point to be borne in mind is that the carrots, turnips, &c., should be boiled as soon as they are cut up into shape; short thin strips are best for ordinary soup, although of course, if appearances are much studied, they can be shaped with a tin cutter into any form desired. Again, the green peas should be freshly shelled, and the asparagus freshly cut.

With regard to the stock or clear soup, the methods of making which I have often described before: for spring soup it is essential that it should be light-coloured; stock made from veal and chicken bones will be found best. Also, pray let the soup be in keeping with the purity of the fresh young vegetables that will be served in it. Indeed, I often think the most practical receipt for making stock and soup is to tell cooks what *not* to put in it.

Pray avoid as far as possible, or indeed altogether, spice, pepper, and mushroom ketchup. I have often tasted soup in which I could detect no flavour whatever except ketchup and black pepper. Recollect that the real beauty of the soup consists in the juicy

flavour of the meats of which it is composed, and to destroy this delicate flavour is to destroy the soup.

In making spring soup it should be remembered that the peas and asparagus-tops when used should be boiled just before serving the soup, and not if possible be allowed to remain in the soup for hours. It will also be found a great improvement to add a few small leaves of fresh tarragon to the soup. I mention the tarragon separately in order to warn you against its indiscriminate use. Tarragon has such a powerful flavour that it is apt, like garlic, to assert its presence only to the exclusion of all its companions. When fresh tarragon-leaves cannot be obtained, a pinch of dried tarragon can be boiled in a little stock, and the latter added to the soup, after the tarragon has been strained off.

A great authority among cooks recommends what he terms *croûtons à la duchesse* to be added to spring soup. The following is his receipt:—

Cut the crust off a rasped French roll into strips. Stamp or cut out these with a round tin or steel cutter, into small pellets about the size of a shilling, and dry them in the oven ready for use. A small handful of these *croûtons* must be thrown into the soup just before sending to table.

It is undoubtedly a fact that in the present day there are many families who never buy meat for the purpose of making stock, owing to the extravagant price to which meat has risen, but who instead use extract of meat in addition to the bones of joints, trimmings, &c., that may be left. Now it will often be found that when bones are used it is almost impossible to get the stock bright.

Imitation soup can be made from extract of meat without bones. Take a carefully cleaned carrot, turnip, onion, and half a small head of celery, and put them into some boiling water together with some parsley, a little salt, and a pinch of dried tarragon. Let these boil for an hour or more and then strain them off; add now a little gelatine, about two tea-spoonfuls of extract of meat, mix to a quart about half a tea-spoonful of arrowroot in a little cold water and add, and let it all boil up.

The gelatine gives it a glutinous taste that makes the lips sticky. The extract of meat, of course, gives it the meaty flavour; the little quantity of arrowroot does not really thicken the soup, but takes off the watery appearance; and if you wish to be very artful, and wish the soup to look as if it had really been made from meat, you may throw in a piece of butter the size of a pea, which will cause just a few specks of fat to float on the surface, generally observed in all soups made from real meat, however carefully skimmed.

We will next consider another most delicious soup fit for, and in season in spring—viz., green pea soup. I think the chief points of importance in making green pea soup are to try and obtain as much flavour of the pea without extravagance, and also to obtain a really good bright green colour. For the first purpose we

must utilise the husks of the peas, and for the second purpose we shall require some spinach.

Take about a quart of peas, having first placed all the husks, which should be thoroughly green and not yellow, into two quarts of stock to boil. Next strain this off, and add to the liquor half the quantity of peas (reserving the brightest green half), two handfuls of spinach, two small green onions cut up, and a couple of lettuces also cut up. Let all this boil for some time, and then let the whole be sent through a tamis or fine wire sieve, for which purpose it will be found to save time if the pulp, after straining, be pounded in a mortar. At any rate, have patience and send the whole through the tamis. The remainder of the peas must be boiled separate, being thrown into *boiling* water in which the steam is not shut in, and must be added to the soup before serving. Though not absolutely essential, a few slices of lean ham boiled in the soup will be found to be a great improvement; a small piece of butter may also be added to the soup before serving. Small pieces of fried bread should be handed round with the soup.

Another very palatable soup that makes an agreeable change is vegetable marrow soup; although, perhaps, strictly speaking it is more of a summer than a spring soup.

Take a few small vegetable marrows; these must be peeled and cut into small pieces. Next have ready some good, strong, white stock; let this stock boil, and then throw in the pieces of vegetable marrow. When these are boiled and are quite tender, send the whole through a wire sieve with a wooden spoon, and add about half a pint of boiling cream; and serve some pieces of fried bread separately.

I would here give some general directions with regard to cream. Nearly all white soups—indeed, I cannot call to mind a single exception—require boiling cream to be added to them. Now, cream (in London especially) is not only very expensive, but oftentimes almost impossible to be obtained in a really pure state. Is there any wholesome substitute that can be added instead? I think, yes. If proper precautions be taken to concentrate the original stock, it will be found that the addition of double the quantity of milk to the cream ordered, and one yolk of an egg, will have, if not the same, at any rate a very similar effect.

Suppose, now, in making the foregoing receipt for vegetable marrow soup, that the quantity of stock was, say three pints, and that we were going to add half a pint of cream. Let, first, this stock reduce itself by boiling till it is reduced to a quart; then take a pint of milk, boil it till the white foam is on the point of rising, and pour it quickly into the stock. Recollect that boiled milk has a different flavour to raw milk. I would also warn cooks to have a little water ready to quickly pour into the empty saucepan out of which the milk has been poured, or the sediment will burn at the bottom of the saucepan, and cause considerable trouble when it has to be cleaned. Should the saucepan be an enamelled one, and get burnt at the bottom and sides, common ashes will be found best for cleaning it. But to return to the soup: we

have not mentioned the yolk of egg. This must not be added till quite the last thing. Take a cup into which the yolk must be placed, pour the hot soup into the tureen, next take a spoonful of this hot soup and add to the yolk, and beat it up; then a little more soup, till the cup is nearly full; then pour the cupful into the tureen, and give it one stir round. By this means all fear of the egg curdling will be avoided. Of course this process should be done quickly, in order that the soup does not get cold, but thick soup like this retains its heat for a very long time.

Another very delicious white soup that is in season in spring is Palestine soup. This soup is generally made by boiling the Jerusalem artichoke in white stock, but it will be found to be a very great improvement to slice the artichokes—say a quarter of a peck—and to allow them to soften gradually in a covered stew-pan, in about a couple of ounces of butter. Care must, however, be taken that these artichokes in softening do not get browned. When tender add them to a quart of good white stock, in which, if possible, some chicken bones have been stewed; and after allowing them to boil for some time, rub the whole through a tamis, or wire sieve. A bay-leaf boiled in the stock will be found to improve the flavour. Then add the half-pint of cream and a small lump of sugar. Fried bread should be served. Now, of course, what we have said with regard to the substitute for cream applies equally to this soup.

A very delicious addition to any good clear stock is some balls made of spinach. Take a small quantity of spinach, and having carefully washed it in plenty of water, so as to entirely remove the grit, boil it in a saucepan till it is quite tender; then mash it up well, removing any stringy pieces that may be in; add a little butter, pepper, and salt, a suspicion of nutmeg, and the yolk of one egg. Squeeze it all as dry as possible in a cloth, and roll this spinach pulp into small balls about the size of marbles, and let them get a little dry on the outside. Next beat up the white of the egg thoroughly, and dip these balls in one by one, throwing them quickly into boiling water. This coagulates the egg and helps to prevent the balls breaking in the soup. These balls should be added to the soup only long enough to get them hot through; a few minutes, in fact, before serving are sufficient. These green balls in the soup, especially if the stock be bright and light coloured, have a very pretty effect.

I would here again remind you of the importance, now that hot weather is approaching, of warming up soup even when it is not wanted for use, in order to prevent its getting bad. Recollect, also, that soup in which a quantity of vegetables have been boiled is apt to turn sooner than that which contains meat only. Soup when cold, if it turns to a hard jelly, will keep for a long time; but soup that contains vegetables, and that is not a jelly when cold, soon decomposes. When soup that has been a jelly seems to run partially liquid, and has an appearance of being slightly frothy on the top, you may be sure that it is turning—if, indeed, it has not turned quite sour.