

WINTER SOUPS: HOW TO MAKE THEM.

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HOW often during the recent severe season has the remark been heard, "I should like a good basin of hot soup!" How often, thanks to the charitable of all and of no denominations, has some poor shivering wretch been brought back almost from death to life by the timely aid of a basin of soup, the intrinsic value of which has barely been one penny!

In each of these cases a certain quality of soup is necessary, and it is this quality which we designate as "winter soup."

No one will deny that for the commencement of dinner that pale straw-coloured fluid, bright as Amon-tillado sherry, in which red carrots and green peas appear, is an excellent soup, well adapted for the purpose it serves, viz., a sort of polite introduction to the good things that are to follow; but when we stamp our feet, and clap our hands to circulate the blood in our fingers, and observe, "I should like a good basin of soup," it is not our pale straw-coloured friend we refer to, but something far different—un-Frenchlike, and essentially English—something sticky, hot, awkward for beards, but that does us good, and makes us feel as if we had had something when finished.

We will commence with a few words about that good old-fashioned winter beverage, pea soup. I will not now enter into exact details, as the recipe has been often given, and is generally well known, but would again remind you of the importance of patience in sending the *whole* of the ingredients through a sieve. Among the ignorant poor it is not an uncommon thing for them to make pea soup, and after boiling the peas for a long time, to strain them off and positively throw them away. Of course they do not know the meaning of "rub it through a tamis," nor do they possess a wire sieve. Soup has always been a stumbling-block with the English poor; the compound they make is unsatisfactory, and they fall back upon their piece of bacon boiled with the greens, if country people; or if inhabitants of large cities, to probably the best rump steak at sixteenpence a pound on Sunday, and bread-and-dripping for the remainder of the week.

The best stock for making pea soup is the water which has boiled a leg of pork. When I say the best stock, I do not mean that good strong stock made from shin of beef and knuckle of veal is not superior, but I consider pea soup as an economical soup, and that one essential point is that it should be made the means of utilising greasy liquor that would be very difficult to use in any other way.

I should be sorry to pass from the subject of pea soup without a word about those excellent institutions, soup kitchens. I fear, however, that the all-important point that these establishments are essentially charitable institutions is too often lost sight of, and that in occasional cases the object of the management seems

to be to vie with and out-do some similar establishment in excellence, rather than aiming at feeding the largest number of poor at the smallest possible cost.

Large quantities of shin of beef, &c., are often made the basis of the soup given away in soup kitchens, and there is no doubt whatever that the soup is considerably improved thereby. Were smaller quantities of fat pork substituted for the meat, a far greater quantity of soup could be made for the money; and if, as it should be, the object of these institutions is to feed the starving or semi-starving poor, and not to encourage sturdy beggars, the object is far more likely to be attained.

I was once told at a "soup kitchen" that unless some good meat was in the soup they wouldn't eat it. This argument holds good for trade, not for charity. If I open a soup kitchen to make a profit, all well and good, I must do my best to please my customers, like any other tradesman; but if a beggar stops me and says he is starving, and I give him half a quartern loaf, should he throw it away and say that is not good enough for him, it is no charity to take the man into a cook's-shop and give him a nice tender cut off a sirloin.

If a dog refuses bread, he will be improved both morally and physically by being kept without meat till he eats some. If so-called starving poor—but who probably are more often pushing beggars, or poor with next to no feelings of self-respect—cannot take pea soup unless made from gravy-beef, and with meat in it, they will be rendered none the worse by a little enforced abstinence.

A soup somewhat similar to pea soup is lentil soup. There has been much discussion lately on the subject of lentils, and there can be no doubt that they contain a great amount of nourishment. The lentils should be first thoroughly washed in several waters; the washing should be continued till the lentils settle a bright red at the bottom of the water, which keeps clear after they have been stirred up.

If possible, let the lentils soak for twenty-four hours in the water, into which a piece of soda has been put the size of a very small pea. Let them afterwards boil slowly in this water; and as I wish to speak of pure lentil soup, we will describe how to make it without any meat stock at all.

Suppose the quantity of lentils used to be one pint: to this add two large onions, one good-sized carrot, one turnip, and one head of celery. Let all boil together for long time until thoroughly tender, filling up the saucepan as the water boils away; the longer it boils the better. Skim it a little at starting, and of course take care that the vegetables are all thoroughly clean before they are put into the saucepan.

Next rub the whole through a wire sieve with a large wooden spoon—anything strong with a flat bottom does, if you have no strong spoon, such as a small jar, the top of which can be easily grasped.

Have patience with the soup, and send it all through, and put it back to boil gently in the saucepan; add a little salt and pepper, and you will find the soup very nice and nutritious as it is.

You can, however, improve it as follows:—Boil away the soup as much as possible, and when it gets quite thick add to it a quart of milk that has been *boiled* separately; one bay-leaf may be boiled in the milk. Stir it all up together, and dissolve in it about an ounce of butter; send it to table very hot, and hand round small pieces of fried bread or toast cut up into small squares. Bear in mind to stir up the soup with the ladle before helping each person.

A very nice winter soup is Scotch broth. This is best made from neck of mutton, though any kind of good fresh mutton will do. Trim a neck of mutton exactly as if you were going to make small mutton cutlets, only cut off nearly all the fat, as the fat swells very much when boiled. Take the scrag end and trimmings and any mutton bones, and make some mutton broth, adding if possible some clear ordinary stock. Add to this the trimmings of a head of celery, the white or inside part of three carrots, having cut off the outer or red part, an onion, and one or two leeks, according to size.

While this is all boiling, cut up the red part of the carrots into small dice, as well as a couple of turnips; slice up two leeks, carefully cutting them thin and crossways, as well as a good-sized onion and the best part of a head of celery, and add three ounces of pearl barley, parboiled and nearly tender.

Boil these gently with the cutlets in a little of the broth in a stew-pan till the vegetables are quite tender and the cutlets are done, but not dried up or over-cooked. Next add the broth, after straining it off, and shortly before sending it to table get a dessert-spoonful of finely-chopped parsley, and throw it into boiling water for a minute to blanch it, and add it to the broth.

This Scotch broth has a very delicate flavour, and a very little salt should be added, and no pepper. Pepper can easily be added afterwards, if preferred. By parboiling the pearl barley separately, the appearance of the soup is much improved. Rice will be found a good substitute for barley.

A very nice soup can be made from potatoes, and it is an excellent way of using up cold potatoes that may be left, as the potatoes should be thoroughly boiled, in order to get rid of the water in them, and also steamed, so as to get them floury, as these potatoes make the best soup.

Take a quart of good broth, and add to it a large onion or two moderate-sized ones, one carrot, and half a head of celery. Let all boil together till quite tender, and then add the boiled potatoes, and rub it all through a wire sieve. The quantity of potatoes must be sufficient to make the soup as thick as pea soup. Now boil separately some milk, about equal in quantity to the thick purée, and when the milk has boiled, add both together, and as usual serve some fried bread or some toast cut up with the soup.

A little finely-chopped parsley may be added at the

finish—only let it be a little, and do not let the parsley boil in the soup longer than can be helped. When new potatoes have just come into season, this soup can be made as directed, and a few new potatoes boiled whole added to it. Remember, however, that the new potatoes must be very small, should be boiled separately, and, if anything, should be rather under than over-done—*i.e.*, in eating them you should feel that you have something to bite.

A very nice Scotch soup, and vastly superior to Scotch broth, is cockaleekie soup. This is simply made by first parboiling a fowl in some clear stock, and cutting it up into small joints, removing the skin and larger bones.

Let these bones simmer for some time, and then, having strained them off, cut in slices about half a dozen leeks and boil these in the soup till quite tender, then add the small joints of fowl and boil them for a few minutes longer till they are quite done, and send them to table in the soup. This soup is very nutritious and admirably adapted for luncheon.

A very good soup, which for the want of a better name I will call Common-Sense Soup, can be made as follows:—Get three-pennyworth of bones from the butcher's and put them to boil with a little salt, three beads of garlic, and a good bunch of parsley. If you have any stock, such as the water that has boiled a silverside of beef or a leg of mutton, all the better. Let this be skimmed, and if it can be boiled the day before it is wanted so that it can get cold it will be as well, as the fat can then be removed.

Next strain off this stock and put in it, sliced up small, a couple of onions, a head of celery, a couple of carrots, and about a pound of lean mutton, which can be boiled in it till tender and then shredded, only do not let it boil long after shredding, as the pieces of meat will then get hard and stringy. A good dessert-spoonful of extract of meat will make this soup very rich and good, and though extract of meat is a somewhat expensive ingredient, yet the soup is so nourishing that you save in the far lesser quantity of meat that will be eaten after the soup.

It should be remembered that fat helps to keep us warm, and that consequently a rich and greasy soup, that would be very unpalatable in summer, is very suitable in winter. One of the greasiest soups I know is made from pig's head. Get half a pig's head and thoroughly clean it and scald it, and put it in some stock and parboil it; then take it out and cut off all the best part of the meat and put it by, and put back the bones into the stock with a couple of onions, a carrot, and a head of celery, and a couple of beads of garlic, if the flavour of garlic is not objected to. Add also a table-spoonful of dried basil and another of dried marjoram, as well as a little thyme. Let all this boil for five or six hours, and strain it off and put in the meat, and add a spoonful of extract of meat and about a quarter of a pound of brown roux—*i.e.*, flour fried a rich brown in butter. Let this simmer gently by the fire and occasionally skim it, as there is a great deal of fat to be thrown up.

This soup will be found quite equal to mock turtle.