



Soups, Chowders, and Stews

In the second department of meat-cookery, to wit, the slow and gradual application of heat for the softening and dissolution of its fibre and the extraction of its juices, common cooks are equally untrained. Where is the so-called cook who understands how to prepare soups and stews? These are precisely the articles in which a French kitchen excels. The soup-kettle, made with a double bottom, to prevent burning, is a permanent, ever-present institution, and the coarsest and most impracticable meats distilled through that alembic come out again in soups, jellies, or savory stews. The toughest cartilage, even the bones, being first cracked, are here made to give forth their hidden virtues, and to rise in delicate and appetizing forms.

One great law governs all these preparations: the application of heat must be gradual, steady, long protracted, never reaching the point of active boiling. Hours of quiet simmering dissolve all dissoluble parts, soften the sternest fibre, and unlock every minute cell in which Nature has stored away her treasures of nourishment. This careful and protracted application of heat and the skillful use of flavors constitute the two main points in all those nice preparations of meat for which the French have so many names—processes by which a delicacy can be imparted to the coarsest and cheapest food superior to that of the finest articles under less philosophic treatment.

French soups and stews are a study, and they would not be an unprofitable one to any person who wishes to live with comfort and even elegance on small means.

The American Woman's Home (1869)
Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe



“But you look tired,” [Robert] added, solicitously. “Would you like a cup of bouillon? Shall I stir you a toddy? Let me mix you a toddy with a drop of Angostura.”

She acceded to the suggestion of bouillon, which was grateful and acceptable. He went himself to the kitchen, which was a building apart from the cottages and lying to the rear of the house. And he himself brought her the golden-brown bouillon, in a dainty Sèvres cup, with a flaky cracker or two on the saucer.

The Awakening (1899)
Kate Chopin

Bouillon for Parties and Germans

2 pounds lean beef
1 quart cold water
1 small onion
1 bay leaf
1 stalk celery or 1/2 teaspoon
celery seed
sprig parsley
salt and pepper
1 egg white and shell
1/2 cup cold water

Free the meat from all fat and gristle and chop it fine (your butcher can do this best). Put the meat in the soup kettle with the water, bay leaf, parsley, onion and celery; cover the kettle closely and place it on the back part of the range for two hours. Then place it over a good fire; skim at the first boil. Now place it over a moderate fire and simmer gently four hours. Strain, return it to the soup kettle, add salt and pepper. Beat the white of one egg with half a cup of cold water until thoroughly mixed. Wash the egg shell, mash it and add it to the white. In breaking the egg, take care to separate it so nicely that none of the yellow gets into the white—as the smallest portion of the yellow will prevent the bouillon from being perfectly clear. Now add the white, shell and water to the boiling bouillon; let it boil hard for ten minutes; then throw in one gill of cold water and boil five minutes longer; then take the kettle off the fire and strain through a flannel bag, add salt to taste and color with caramel—about half a teaspoonful to a quart. (See recipe for Caramel.)

Mrs. Rorer’s Philadelphia Cook Book (1886)

Note: Germans are dancing parties featuring an elaborate reel dance resembling a cotillion, called a german, popular with all ages.

To Make Caramel, or Burned Sugar, for Coloring Broth

1 cup sugar
1 1/4 cup water
pinch salt

The appearance of broth is improved by being of a rich amber color. The most innocent coloring substance, which does not impair the flavor of the broth, is caramel, prepared as follows:

Put into a porcelain saucepan, say half a pound of sugar, and add a table-spoonful of water. Stir it constantly over the fire until it has a bright, dark-brown color, being very careful not to let it burn or blacken. Then add a tea-cupful of water and a little salt; let it boil a few moments longer; cool and strain it. Put it away in a close-corked bottle, and it is always ready for coloring soups.

Practical Cooking and Dinner Giving (1887)
Mary F. Henderson

“But I knowed what his poor, cranky system needed, an’ I knowed how to get it into him, especially as he’d never tasted meat in all his life. From that time on, he [Mrs. Dodd’s third husband, a “food crank”] never saw no meat on our table, nor no chickens, nor sea scavengers, nor nothin’, but all day, while he was gone, I was busy with my soup pot, a-makin’ condensed extracts of meat for flavourin’ vegetables an’ sauces an’ so on.

“He took mightily to my cookin’ an’ frequently said he’d never et such exquisite victuals. I’d make cream soups for him, an’ in every one, there’d be over a cupful of solid meat jelly, as rich as the juice you find in the pan when you cook a first-class roast of beef. I’d stew potatoes in veal stock, and cook rice slow in water that had had a chicken boiled to rags in it. Once I put a cupful of raw beef juice in a can of tomatoes I was cookin’ and he et a’most all of ’em.

“As he kep’ on havin’ more confidence in me, I kep’ on usin’ more an’ more, an’ a-usin’ oyster liquor for flavourin’ in most everything durin’ the R months. Once he found nearly a bushel of clam-shells out behind the house an’ wanted to know what they was an’ what they was doin’ there. I told him the fish man had give ’em to me for a border for my flower beds, whitch was true. I’d only paid for the clams—there wa’ n’t nothin’ said about the shells—an’ the juice from them clams livened up his soup an’ vegetables for over a week.”

“Mrs. Dodd’s Third Husband,” At the Sign of the Jack O’ Lantern (1905)
Myrtle Reed

Chicken Consommé, or Stock

1 chicken
4 quarts water
1 onion
2 celery sticks
1 tablespoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper

Place a fowl, cut into pieces, in four quarts of cold water; let come slowly to the boiling-point; then draw it to the side of range and simmer for three hours. At the end of this time add one slice of onion, two sticks of celery, one tablespoonful of salt, one saltspoonful of pepper, and simmer one or two hours longer; strain into earthen bowl, and let cool without covering.

This stock may be cleared the same as beef stock, and served in cups for luncheon. It may also be mixed with gelatine, cleared, and used for aspic, in Russian salads, jellied chicken, etc.

The meat from the breast and second joints may be removed from the stock-pot, when tender, and reserved for timbales, croquettes, patties, etc.

If this soup is not rich enough, it can be reduced by opening the lid of the pot, after it has simmered the required time, and allowed to boil uncovered until as rich as desired.

The Century Cook Book (1896)
Mary Ronald

White Soup

1 chicken (or 1 pound veal, or
use stock from clear or amber
soup)
2 onions
1 cup celery
1 quart milk
1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon flour or cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon mace
1/2 teaspoon white pepper
(Optional: 3 eggs, lightly beaten)

Veal or chicken must be used for this soup; and the stock must always be prepared the day beforehand, having been flavored with two chopped onions and a cup of cut celery, or celery-seed and other seasoning, in the proportions already given. On the day it is to be used, heat a quart of milk; stir one tablespoonful of butter to a cream; add a heaping tablespoonful of flour or corn-starch, a saltspoonful of mace, and the same amount of white pepper. Stir into the boiling milk, and add to the soup. Let all boil a moment, and then pour into the tureen. Three eggs, beaten very light and stirred into the hot milk without boiling, make a still richer soup. The bones of cold roast chicken or turkey may be used in this way; and the broth of any meat, if perfectly clear, can serve as foundation, though veal or chicken is most delicate.

The Easiest Way in Housekeeping and Cooking
(1893)
Helen Campbell