

DAEMONLUNA MAKES SOUP NOT SO MUCH A RECIPE AS AN ADAPTABLE FRAMEWORK

INGREDIENTS: Highly variable. What have you got?

COOK TIME: How long have you got?

MY BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SOUP: Substitute and estimate freely and often. Taste as you go. Soup is excellent for using things up, and is almost always just as good if not better the second day.

BASIC COMFORT FOOD SOUP:

- Chop up an onion, and three or four carrots and stalks of celery.
- Brown in some olive or vegetable oil for 3-4 minutes.
- Add enough chicken/vegetable stock to cover it, and then about the same amount again, depending on the stuff-to-liquid ration you like.
- Add a couple chopped potatoes (bite-sized pieces). Russet or another thin skimmed potato will hold its shape. Baking potatoes will fall apart and thicken the soup. Both are valid, soup-worthy options!
- Or, wait and add noodles at the end (they don't take nearly as long to cook as potatoes.) Or rice, cooking time varies.
- Add pieces of chicken or another protein if you want.
- Add salt and pepper to taste, and a bay leaf if you feel like it.
- Add an optional quarter to half a cup of red lentils for extra texture and protein.
- Simmer for about forty-five minutes.
- Take out the bay leaf!
- Eat as is, or blend with an immersion blender for a creamy soup.

If your soup is bland, it probably needs a bit more time to reduce, or salt, acid, or umami. Things I regularly add when tasting:

- Salt: salt, smoked salt, or soy sauce
- Acid: various kinds of vinegar or lemon/lime juice
- Umami: Vietnamese fish sauce, miso, powdered chicken stock

It will get even better overnight. This sort of soup also freezes well. Current self is often grateful to past self when I find an overlooked yogurt container full of premade soup in the freezer. You might need to add a bit more water or stock when reheating.

ADDITIONS AND ALTERNATIVES:

- Add some milk, cream, sour cream, or evaporated milk (just don't mix it up with sweetened condensed milk!), take out the bay leaf, and blend if you want smooth, creamy soup.
- Want another route to thick and creamy soup? Leftover mashed potatoes!
- Other good additions (that I wouldn't necessarily blend except for the cauliflower) for a more substantial soup include cauliflower, corn, green or yellow beans, kale or spinach, and chicken, sausage, or tomatoes, or whatever else soup-like is languishing in your fridge.
- You can tweak the flavour with herbs, too. Parsley or oregano or rosemary or... infinite variations!
- You can also try only blending half of it, to save some of the pieces of veggie.
- Good with a squeeze of lemon juice or splash of vinegar at the end.

MORE CHUNKY SOUP VARIATIONS:

To make vaguely Italian Olive Garden soup, brown onion and celery (and carrot if you feel like it), add chicken stock and potato, simmer for about forty-five minutes, and add cooked sausage, kale, and parmesan cheese at the end. The kale needs 4-5

minutes to cook, but that's about it. You may need extra salt and pepper, too. White beans would be good in this, and/or chicken. Add a bit of cream to be decadent, or some milk right at the end.

You could make a southwestern variation with yams, corn, and black beans, optional tomatoes, and skip the parmesan.

Or, a summer variation with yellow or green beans and peas, and summer savoury. If you have the rind of a piece of parmesan cheese, toss it in for extra flavour, and whoever ends up with it in their bowl gets to chewy the last of the gooey cheese bits off the rind.

AVGOLEMONO, OR EGG AND LEMON SOUP

A go-to for an easy meal in our house when not feeling well.

- Take a small pot.
- Bring as much chicken stock as you want for your bowl of soup up to a boil.
- If you want pasta, add it straight in the stock. Orzo and egg noodles are both good.
- Beat up two eggs.
- When the soup is ready (has come to a boil or the pasta is done), take off the heat, and right away dump in the egg all at once, and whisk vigorously for about thirty seconds. If you aren't careful, you will end up with little bits of scrambled egg in your soup, which is okay too, but what you're aiming for is a smooth, creamy soup.
- Add the juice of a lemon (or a slog of bottled lemon juice), and pepper.
- Green onion and/or parsley are nice if you have them and are so inclined.
- Powdered or boxed chicken stock is just fine, but this is tastiest and has the most nutritional value with home-made chicken stock.

ADVANCED SOUP-MAKING, OR, HOW TO MAKE CHICKEN SOUP STOCK (WHICH IS NOT HARD AT ALL BUT TAKES TIME): It is not as complicated as it looks!

THE BASICS: Take bones and veggies, add water, simmer for a long time, strain, and skim the fat off if you want. Food from bones and scraps is a basic part of our human culinary heritage!

THE LONG VERSION, WITH COMMENTARY:

- Take chicken bones. The same process holds true for beef or pork or ham bones (We usually put the bones in the freezer when we get a whole chicken, either from take-out or pre-cooked at the grocery store, or when we roast chicken or turkey. You can also use turkey necks, which are cheap in the meat section at the grocery store. There can still be meat on the bones, but there doesn't have to be.) Chicken bones plus a ham bone is my current preferred combo for maximum taste, but really, it's whatever you have.
- Put in your biggest pot and fill up with cold water. Add four or five carrots, pieces of celery, and a couple onions. Roughly chop into big chunks--it's all going to get tossed at the end, anyhow.
- Add a couple bay leaves, a handful of whole peppercorns or some pepper, and a couple spoonfuls of salt. Bring to a boil. Turn down to a low simmer. Sub in other aromatics for the bay leaf if you want a different flavour profile (star anise, ginger and lemongrass! Rosemary and oregano! None at all! Garlic has never gone well for me for an extended cooking time, it always gets bitter.)
- Let it simmer for eight hours at least, checking every once and a while to make sure it hasn't boiled down too low. Add more water if it needs it. Taste occasionally after six or seven hours. If it's foamy, you can skim it off. That's insoluble proteins, and it's fine to leave it, but some people don't want their stock to be cloudy.

- If it's not chicken-y/flavourful enough, it might need more time, just need to reduce more, or need more salt.
- Twelve hours is my default, but I have left it barely simmering on really low overnight, and it cooked for more than twenty-four hours and was awesome. I have also forgotten to add water and ended up with scorched veggies and chicken bones and nothing usable. Oops. I have also accidentally dumped all the stock down the drain and kept the boiled bones, because my brain went into pasta-cooking mode on autopilot. Don't do that, either. If you can easily snap a large chicken bone in half, you've got all the flavour you're going to get out of them.
- Yes, you can use the soup setting on a pressure cooker or Instant pot. I am picky and don't think it tastes the same, but as long as you have something you're happy with, have at 'er.

When it's done, strain the stock into a big bowl or pitcher, throw out the bones and veggies, and put it in the fridge for a few hours--or overnight. Then the fat will solidify on top and be easy to scoop off. You can skip this step if you want, and just use the stock right away. It may solidify a bit in the fridge because of the collagen in the bones--don't worry if it turns into a semi-solid wobbly jelly. It will liquify when you heat it up. Use within four or five days, or freeze. If you freeze it in portion-sized baggies, you can make soup in small batches, or use it for rice, other cooking, or more soup.

HOW TO MAKE VEGETABLE STOCK: Take a couple carrots, some celery, and a couple onions. Chop into big chunks. Add a bay leaf or two, peppercorns, and salt. Other things to optionally add are mushrooms, leeks (if you use the whites for something, save the green ends for soup), parsley, or thyme. If it's going wilt-y in the fridge, it's still perfectly good for soup. I sometimes toss leftover and wilted bits of soup stock vegetables into the freezer for later. Don't add broccoli or anything cabbage-y, or that's all your soup will taste like. Add cold water,

bring to a boil, then turn down and simmer for about an hour or so. Strain, toss the veggies, and use the stock to make soup or rice or whatever else.

HOW TO MAKE SHRIMP STOCK: when you have shrimp and de-tail them, use the tails to make stock, or freeze them until you have a bunch, which I usually define as the ziplock sandwich bag of shrimp tails is full. Put in cold water, add salt and spices of your choice (peppercorns, bay leaf, star anise and lemongrass, depending on what sort of flavours you want), simmer for about half an hour. If it's tasting a bit bland, boil for longer or add a slog of fish sauce.

TO SUMMARIZE: I LIKE SOUP.

