

# EAT BEAT

by Martha Wagner

## Comfort Food

Comfort food: food that comforts the eater with homey, nostalgic tastes of childhood, especially craved when feeling blue or sick.

The term is appearing in food magazines these days, accompanied by recipes from the good old days, recipes for biscuits and gravy, pot roast, bread pudding and the like.

For me, the most comforting everyday food for the cold winter months is soup. Home isn't homey unless I have a pot of it on the stove or in the refrigerator. You don't have to be sick to find comfort in soup and you don't have to be Jewish to crave chicken soup when you are under the weather.

Store-bought soups are fine in a pinch, but homemade soups are cheaper and easier to put together than many people realize. They do not require hours of stock making. Water or canned or packaged stocks will do. Soups make an excellent home for leftovers such as cooked pasta, beans, rice, potatoes and chicken. With a good amount of vegetables and some protein, soup can be main-dish fare. Leftover soup? No problem. Take it for lunch in a thermos or put it in the freezer.

Soup not only warms the weary body and soul, it's been proven a successful diet aid. Several studies have shown that daily soup eaters consume fewer calories than non-soup eaters. One reason is that soup has a lot of water, so it's not calorically dense. Another reason is that hot soup must be consumed more slowly than other foods, giving our bodies time to register satiety before we've overeaten.

Homemade stock is the traditional beginning for homemade soups. Although you can cook up a large pot of stock at once and freeze it, it does take time. Chicken stock usually takes an hour or more and beef stock, twice as long. Fish stock takes about half an hour. A quick vegetable stock can be made by cooking vegetable scraps (carrot tips, onion bits and skin, parsley, celery and leaves, a clove of garlic, etc.) in water, seasoned with salt and pepper, for half an hour. Most basic cookbooks offer stock recipes.

One problem with canned broth and bouillon is sodium—as much as a day's quota in just one cup. An obvious solution to the problem is low-sodium products, increasingly available at natural food stores and some supermarkets. Another solution is to dilute regular canned stock with an equal amount of water, then cook with chopped fresh vegetables for 15 minutes. Soups made with tomatoes and/or dried beans can usually be made with water instead of stock.

Despite their liquid nature, soups can be high in fat if enriched with cream, whole milk or lots of cheese. Low-fat milk or evaporated skim milk can usually replace cream or whole milk. Yogurt can replace cream or sour cream as a topping.

Following are two comforting winter soup recipes, one a creamy potato soup, the other a hearty tomato-y lentil soup.

### Dill-Caraway Potato Soup

3 large potatoes, sliced into 1-inch cubes  
1 medium leek, chopped  
1 medium carrot, chopped  
1 stalk celery, chopped  
3-1/2 cups vegetable stock or water  
1 to 2 cups milk  
2 tsp. dillweed  
1/2 tsp. caraway seeds  
freshly-ground pepper, to taste  
1/2 cup plain yogurt  
1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley

Place vegetables and stock or water in a large soup pot. Cook over medium heat, covered, until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes. Pour soup into blender in two batches and blend just until smooth. Return soup to pot, add enough milk for desired consistency, then the dillweed, caraway and pepper. Heat soup a few minutes more. Just before serving, stir in yogurt, but do not boil (and remember not to boil soup when reheating). Garnish with parsley. Makes 6 servings. Note: Potato soup does not freeze well.

### Easy Lentil Soup

2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 large onion, chopped  
1 large carrot, diced  
1/2 teaspoon each thyme and marjoram  
4 cups vegetable stock or water  
1-1/4 cups brown lentils, rinsed  
1 16-ounce can whole peeled tomatoes salt or miso, to taste  
2 cups chopped fresh kale or other green (optional)  
grated Swiss or cheddar cheese (optional)

Heat oil in soup pot and saute onion until it turns clear. Add carrot and herbs and saute 1 minute more. Add stock or water, lentils and tomatoes. Cover and simmer 30 to 40 minutes or until lentils are tender. If soup is very thick, add more water. Add salt if desired or miso, creamed with a half cup of the soup. Five minutes before

serving add optional greens to pot. If using cheese, place 2 tablespoons in the bottom of each bowl. Ladle soup over cheese. Makes 6 servings.

### Veal Factory Farming

Grain-fed, milk-fed, homegrown, farm-fresh... these adjectives are common on restaurant menus. "Milk-fed" is the description for the pale pink, tender veal served in higher-priced restaurants.

The national Humane Farming Association is beginning a campaign to educate Oregonians about how this meat is raised and to discourage them from ordering it in restaurants.

Traditionally, pale-pink veal was the meat of unweaned calves, but today's "milk-fed" veal animals, according to the HFA, are taken from their mothers and fed a formula of growth stimulants, antibiotics and powdered skim milk. To ensure light-colored meat, the animals are kept anemic by withholding sufficient iron. To prevent muscle development, they are chained in tiny crates, unable to turn around, stretch or exercise. Conditions are so unhealthy, says the HFA, that only massive doses of antibiotics keep the animals alive, and the government has found illegal levels of drug residues in one out of every ten calves slaughtered.

The HFA, along with the Portland-based People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals want to see an end to what they call veal factories. They also want to make people aware of the health risks they take by eating so-called "milk-fed" veal.

The campaign's initial focus is restaurants. The two groups are contacting restaurants and asking them to drop premium veal from their menus or switch their veal purchases to a humane veal producer. They also want to destroy the market for the high-priced meat by encouraging people not to order it when they eat out.

Later on, restaurants continuing to serve veal produced in factory type of operations may be the target of informational picketing. Similar campaigns have been conducted by the California-based Humane Farming Association in California, Washington, DC and the Boston area.

Neither Oregon Home Grown Meats nor the Red Barn Grocery meat market carry veal because they don't approve of the way it's raised. Red Barn does carry young beef, 12 to 18 months old (milk-fed veal is 2 to 3 months old) which, according to market manager Bill Markley, can be used in place of veal.

Custom Meats doesn't carry veal because of the high price and the way in which it's raised. Manager Don Hastings urges his customers to try rabbit as a veal substitute. Rabbits are raised on grain and won't tolerate hormones, he says.

### In Praise of Male Shoppers

You can figure out shoppers' eating habits by assessing what's in their shopping carts, but a new survey of male shoppers has delved into their psyche rather than their purchases.

Men who shop for most of the household food tend to be more achievement-oriented, more considerate and better organized than men who do not, according to the survey. They usually like to cook and frequently vacuum the house, wash the dishes, do the laundry and clean the bathroom.

Nearly 800 men in 12 American cities were interviewed for the study, sponsored by Campbell Soup and People magazine. Some were married and some single. Three-fourths said they frequently buy large amounts of groceries. Those who don't shop regularly preferred such household tasks as—you guessed it—taking out the garbage.

Over 65 percent of the men rated themselves as very considerate, compared to only 53 percent for the non-shoppers. More shoppers than non-shoppers described themselves as liberated, well-organized, intelligent and successful.

Are you in the spirit for Valentine's Day? Fall Creek Bakery is. The bakery's amaretto and chocolate almond tortes are available in individual "Romance Cakes," placed inside heart-shaped boxes.

Newport will host its Ninth Annual Seafood and Wine Festival Feb. 21-23, at South Beach Marina. The event will include live entertainment, a seafood cooking competition, an amateur winemaking competition and booths of over 100 regional food and wine producers. General admission is \$2 per person. For more information, call the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce at 265-8801.

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