



TRASK BEDORTHA

The Art of Soup Recipe

DEVELOPED WITH CHEF GABRIEL GIL,
RABBIT BISTRO AND BAR

This soup method is more than a recipe; it reflects Chef Gil's philosophy and methodology for preparing the exquisite soups at Rabbit Bistro. It allows you to create your own combinations using three ingredients that create a base, build a flavor profile and provide a surprising twist. It is particularly good for those with excess root vegetables, whether from a winter CSA box or your own root cellar. At the restaurant, Chef Gil most frequently uses chicken stock or a heartier stock made with chicken and beef bones, but feel free to use any suitable stock, preferably homemade, or water.

Cream is an optional ingredient, since the soup will be made creamy by blending. If you do not add cream, however, you should add a little brown butter, sour cream, or even refry your soup in a little canola oil, otherwise your soup will taste thin. If you are using water instead of stock, plan to add more cream to round out the flavors.

CHOOSING THE INGREDIENTS

Create a soup base, using one ingredient that will provide the main flavor that the others will complement and contrast. Some options: rutabaga, carrot, celery, locally grown beans or lentils.

Build a flavor profile. Consider your primary ingredient. Butternut squash, for example, is slightly sweet, gentle and earthy. To balance it, you might choose something smoky and hot, like chipotle peppers. This ingredient can be integrated with the base and cooked down, or added later in the process. It might be swirled in at the last minute.

Push the envelope. Break down the components you have, then take a contrasting leap. This ingredient is often added as a garnish, grated or floated on top, or sunk to the bottom as hidden treasure. The butternut-chipotle combination would be surprising with very dark and bitter chocolate, dungeness crab, a chutney made from squash and dates, spiced pumpkin seeds or a froth of tequila and lime (whipped with a whisk or stick blender).

Purchase your ingredients, allowing for several pounds of the base ingredient, several quarts of chicken, beef or vegetable stock, and a cup or so of cream (if you are using cream).

PREPARING THE SOUP

Cook down the main ingredient for about an hour until the cell structure starts to collapse. You may choose to add other flavoring agents, such as onion and garlic, to the main ingredient. For butternut squash, for example, "sweat" cubes of squash with onions and garlic, a knob of butter or canola oil, and a bit of chicken stock for about an hour in a stock pot over low heat with a lid on the pan. Beans have a slightly different procedure. Sweat onion and garlic, then add the beans and some booze with unsalted stock or water to cover and cook until they start to lose their shape.

After your main ingredient has softened, add liquor if you are using it (Chef Gil often uses sherry or white wine) and reduce by half. If you are using fruit (e.g., dates, golden raisins or apples), add it to the pot now. Then add several quarts of your favorite chicken, beef, vegetable stock or water, and simmer until the soup is reduced again by about half.

Purée the soup in a blender, then pass it through a fine strainer for an unparalleled texture. Return the soup to a saucepan and add your flavor enhancer. If using cream, for example, add it and reduce the soup a bit more to thicken and concentrate the flavors. Sour cream should be added after removing the pot from the burner. At the last minute, add a splash of an appropriate vinegar (e.g., if you have used sherry in the soup, add sherry vinegar) or lemon juice to balance the creamy flavors with some acid.

Garnish with your surprise ingredients, if you haven't yet incorporated them, and serve to your delighted guests.



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