

A creamy soup perfect for a chilly day

By Jill Wendholt Silva
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CREAMY CHICKEN AND WILD RICE SOUP

Makes 8 servings (about 9 cups total)

- 1 (4-ounce) box wild rice or ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons uncooked wild rice
- 2 cups water
- 1 (32-ounce) carton reduced-sodium chicken broth, divided
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 2)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, chopped into ¼-inch pieces

- ½ rib celery, chopped into ¼-inch pieces
- 8 ounces fresh button mushrooms, thinly sliced
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup fat-free half and half

Finely chopped green onions or chives for garnish, optional

Bring rice and water to a boil over medium high heat in a medium saucepan. Reduce heat to a simmer and allow to simmer 45 minutes or until rice is done. Drain well and set aside.

Pour 1 cup chicken broth into a medium saucepan. Add chicken breasts to broth and enough water to cover. Bring to a boil over medium high heat. Reduce heat to a simmer and simmer about 12 to 15 minutes or until

chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165 degrees. Remove chicken breasts from liquid and allow to cool slightly. Discard liquid. Cut chicken into small pieces and set aside.

In a 3- or 4-quart saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, celery and mushrooms to saucepan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 5 to 10 minutes. Add flour and stir until smooth and all liquid has evaporated.

Gradually add the remaining 3 cups of low sodium chicken broth, stirring constantly until mixture begins to thicken. Add chicken and wild rice and heat through. Add half and half and stir until blended well. Ladle into bowls and sprinkle with green onions, if desired.

GARDEN

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Also give the plant plenty of room (or avoid that plant completely) if the tag says it is a "vigorous" grower. It may overwhelm its space in that case.

GO NATIVE. If you use plants native to your area, they will be used to your zone, soil, moisture amount, and resistant to plant diseases endemic locally.

They will be more vigorous and practically take care of themselves.

PLAN FOR YEAR-ROUND COLOR.

You may plant a bed with a combination of plants that bloom in

- Late winter: crocus, witchhazel, daffodils, blood-root
- Early spring: pansies
- Mid- to late spring: irises, tulips, and peonies
- Early summer: foxgloves

and astilbe

- Midsummer: bee balm, phlox, and daylilies
- Late summer to early autumn: asters, chrysanthemums, sedum, and goldenrod

Use your artistic instincts. Plant like plants in groups of odd numbers called drifts, and repeat the theme throughout the garden.

Annuals have lots of color, but often don't live through the winter. Some are half-hardy, meaning that they seed down and come up from

seed the following spring.

For trouble-free, go for bulbs and perennials, which means more permanent. Roses and bulbs, yard bushes that flower (need some occasional pruning) such as forsythia, snowball bush, lilac, burning bush, flowering quince, privet, rose of Sharon, and Japanese kerria.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

DOGS

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Hunting dogs (and dogs that go to hunting camp) can be exposed to diseases that are spread by wildlife. In addition to vaccinating against infectious diseases, if you are hunting in an area where rattlesnakes are present, be sure to talk to your veterinarian about the value of a rattlesnake vaccine.

During the Hunt

- Check Feet Frequently
Hunting dogs can rapidly wear their paws out if they are not conditioned. If your dog's paws become sore or tender, or if you are in an area with sharp rocks or thorns, you may consider having them wear booties to protect their feet.
- Look for Lacerations
One of the most common hunting injuries seen in veterinary hospitals is a laceration from a sharp stick or barbed wire. Cuts can be painful, become infected, and even end a hunt if not appropriately cared for. Cuts are oftentimes found on a dogs back, chest and on the front of the elbow.
- Water and High Quality Food
Make sure that your

dog has access to plenty of fresh water — and that he is drinking. Additionally, feed a high quality dog food and make sure that you have enough so that your dog doesn't have to change food during hunting season. Dogs that change food may have gastro-intestinal upset resulting in diarrhea.

• Visibility
Ensuring that your dog is easily seen during hunting season can help prevent him from being shot. This applies to hunting dogs and companion dogs alike. Tying a bright piece of flagging to his collar or having him wear a bright orange vest are two effective ways to increase visibility. Veterinarians frequently see dogs that have been accidentally shot.

• Identification
One sure way to protect your dog during hunting season (and at all times of the year) is by identifying him with a dog tag and/or a microchip. Dog tags should include the dog's name, owners name and contact information. If the phone number on the dog tag is not the number that you will be answering while hunting, attach an auxiliary tag that has your cell number or the contact information of the

place you will be staying. If neither of these is a good option due to cell coverage or lack of a land line, include the phone number of a good friend (and alert them that they may be contacted if your dog is lost). A microchip is a permanent form of identification that has a unique code that is assigned to your dog. If your dog becomes lost and its collar slips off, a microchip may be the link to reuniting your dog with you and your family. Some dogs that are not accustomed to the sounds of gunshots will run away in fear and may become separated from their families during hunting season.

After the Hunt

It is common for hunters to share a bit of the game with their best friend — whether a hunting companion or the family pet. Unfortunately, these tasty rewards of the hunt can haunt a dog. Veterinarians see dogs that have become sick from eating raw meat, ingested bones, game bags or significant portions of an animal hide that has become lodged in the intestinal tract. These painful complications can be avoided by not sharing game with hunting dogs or family pets. Additionally, keeping

a clean camp to ensure that your dog doesn't eat things they shouldn't, will help keep him healthy.

Planning ahead for your four-legged companion will help keep him healthy weather he is part of the chase or patiently awaiting your return.

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APPLES

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- McIntosh — Juicy, with a sharp, lemony taste and tender flesh some might consider almost mushy. If you don't mind the texture, eat it raw. Otherwise, use it for applesauce or apple pie.
- Honeycrisp — Currently the "it" apple, as it has been for the past several years. Sweet, with a nice, crunchy bite, it's best eaten fresh, especially in a salad.

• Braeburn — Juicy, crisp and sweet, with a rich but mild flavor of spice. Their texture makes them great for baking and pies, but they are suited for all uses.

• Jonathan — Sweet, tangy and spicy, these are good to eat raw but are probably most often used in pies, mixed with a firmer-fleshed apple that doesn't break down as much as it cooks.

• Fuji — Sweet and tart, but mostly sweet, with a touch of spice. Crisp and best

eaten raw.

• Envy — Very crisp; sweet with an underlying hint of tartness and notes of vanilla. Great for eating out of hand and for cooked desserts, especially with caramel.

• Red Delicious — Still the most popular apple in America, though its lead over Gala, Fuji and Honeycrisp is shrinking. Sweet and juicy flesh under a bitter skin, and a flavor that is defiantly unassertive.

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