

FOOD COLUMN



# ONE-BOWL WONDER

KITCHEN DIVA PHOTO

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BY ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS AND GINA HARLOW  
THE KITCHEN DIVA

Every day, somewhere in the world, an anthropologist is studying old pottery and other ancient remnants of our society, giving us new insights into our culinary past. Soup, the simple unapologetic dish that is as classic as a black dress, has always been considered a primitive meal. But recent discoveries show that soup may be even older than originally believed.

Scientists at Harvard University have found 20,000-year-old pottery that shows evidence of being exposed to fire. No one knows for sure what was heated, but there are many reasons to believe it was a broth cooked up by our ancient ancestors.

Fast-forward thousands of years, and there is more information available about the one-pot meal called "sop," which referred to a piece of bread eaten in broth. By the 17th century, the word "soup" was being used to describe a pottage,

or broth. What we know today is that soup, in all its flavors, has humble beginnings. But plain or fancy, complicated or straightforward, it is an ingenious way to have a complete meal in one bowl.

Soup, in its many international versions, is an edible ambassador of its origin. From rich, spicy Mexican soups to light Asian broths, soup is as distinct as the people and the countries from which it comes. If most Americans were asked to say the first word that comes to mind when they hear the word "soup," it would be "chicken" or "beef." This reflects our distinct history and what was available to our ancestors.

The early origins of soup consisted of the boiled carcass of an animal. As the early settlers began to have success agriculturally, vegetables were added to the pot. The slaves of the American South, who had little in the way of meat, harkened back to their African roots and were inventive in making soups and stews with vegetables of all kinds. Gumbo, a word

from West African dialects meaning okra, originated this way. The soup consisted of a variety of meats, and thickened with okra or "file," a powder made from ground sassafras leaves.

Although some soups are cold, most are hot, and when frost, snow or chilly air prevail, soup is a wonderful way to create a one-bowl meal. The beauty of soup is that it can reflect whatever you have on hand. It's a great way to use leftovers or make the most of half bags of rice or macaroni, a random carrot or potato, or a mixture of greens. It's also an incomparable way to get the most of meat trimmings or to just be luxurious and cook

a chicken for no other reason than to make the best chicken soup ever.

My recipe for Creamy Chicken Soup is truly a meal in a bowl, and a bright, spicy and flavorful remedy for a cold and dreary day.

— Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is [www.divapro.com](http://www.divapro.com). To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Read Gina Harlow's blog about food

## CREAMY CHICKEN SOUP

- 8 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 1/2 tablespoons poultry seasoning
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups chopped red bell peppers
- 1 cup chopped purple onions
- 1 jalapeno pepper, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 6 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 large Yukon gold potatoes, chopped
- 2 cups fresh sweet corn kernels or 2 cups frozen corn kernels
- 1 1/2 cups whipping cream
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 green onions, roots removed, white and green parts chopped, optional

1. In a 5- to 6-quart Dutch oven, cook bacon until crisp. Remove bacon pieces with a spoon; set aside. Reserve 1 tablespoon of drippings in pan.

2. Add chicken to pan. Sprinkle with poultry seasoning and a teaspoon of salt and black pepper. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until chicken is no longer pink; remove from pan.

3. Add sweet pepper and onion to pan. Cook and stir until tender. Add chopped jalapeno and garlic; cook and stir for 3 minutes.

4. Stir in flour and remaining salt and pepper. Cook and stir for 1 minute. Add broth and potatoes. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cook, uncovered, for 10 minutes or just until potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, stirring occasionally.

5. Stir in chicken, corn, cream, cayenne pepper and bay leaves. Simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Discard bay leaves. Top with green onion, if desired. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

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1 Pet. 5:7

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