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easy & delicious recipes

Rustic Pea & Ham Soup

Introduction:

This rustic, chunky pea soup is deliciously flavoursome and without doubt, it's the smoked pork that adds the most flavour.

This recipe makes a large quantity so you can halve it if you are a small family. However, it lasts well in the fridge and reheats beautifully in the microwave, perfect for offering quick and ready cups of hearty, flavoursome soup to anyone who claims to be hungry on a cold day!

And, as there always seems to be a debate as to the thickness of pea soup, you can make this one as thick or as thin as *you* wish! And read the chefs hint below.

Ingredients

15 ml sunflower oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 large carrot, finely grated or sliced
2 celery stalks, finely sliced
750 g smoked pork (like Kassler rib or Eisbein)
1.5 litre prepared chicken stock
3 bay leaves
500 ml dried green split peas
2 – 3 large potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-cm cubes
Worcester sauce
ground nutmeg
salt
ground white pepper

Method

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the onion, carrots and celery. Sauté until soft and golden. Add the smoked pork, stock and bay leaves and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover with a lid and simmer for 90 minutes or until the pork is tender.

Meanwhile, place the peas in a second large saucepan and completely cover with cold water – at least 1.5 litres. Do not add any salt or salty ingredient – the salt will prevent your peas from becoming soft and tender. Now bring the peas to a boil and skim off any foam that appears on the surface. Reduce heat, partially cover and simmer for 45 – 60 minutes or until the peas are tender and disintegrated. But you need to watch it (peas tend to boil over ferociously and they also tend to catch, spoiling the whole idea of serving pea soup for dinner) and stir and replace the water when and if needed.

When the pork is tender, remove the saucepan from the heat and lift the pork out of the stock. Remove any bones and fatty rinds and cut the meat into small dice. If you like little pieces of spek (lard) in your soup, cut the fatty skin of the pork also in small dice. Discard the bone and return the diced pork to the stock. Also add the peas with its cooking liquid and then add the

potatoes and stir well. At this stage you can add more water or chicken stock if you want a thinner soup. Just be a little careful of stock cubes as they tend to be salty. Rather add water at this stage if you need to and season the soup to taste with the Worcester sauce, nutmeg, salt and pepper.

Return the saucepan to the heat, bring the soup to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for ten minutes, stirring every few minutes.

Remove from heat and season to taste with the Worcester sauce, ground nutmeg, salt and ground white pepper.

Serve with fresh, crisp croutons, diced plain or Parma ham and buttered light rye bread or crusty rolls.

Serves 8 or more

Chef's hint:

We love this sort-of chunky-smooth soup. But lots of people prefer their pea soup smooth and/or very thick. If that's your preference, then simply cook as indicated above until you remove the pork from the stock. Then combine the stock, cooked peas and potatoes and cook until the potatoes are tender. Then puree the soup and season as above. Your soup should be thick enough to your liking. Now you can choose to dice and add the pork to the soup or to serve the pork separately or reserve it for another meal or dish.