

The warm weather has left us in the cold. Time for some good soups to take away the chill.

Let us know if there is something you would like us to put in our column, or if you have a recipe to share, please submit to ads@thedrummer.com.

Perfect Potato Soup

Yield: 12 servings

Prep Time: 10 mins

Cook Time: 20 mins

Total Time: 30 mins

Submitted by Lisa Parker – Drummer Test Kitchen

6 slices thin bacon, cut into 1" pcs.
1 whole med. onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
3 whole carrots, scrubbed clean & diced
3 stalks celery, diced
6 whole sm. russet potatoes, peeled & diced
8 c. low sodium chicken or vegetable broth
3 T. all-purpose flour
1 c. milk
1/2 c. heavy cream
1/2 tsp. salt, more to taste
Black pepper, to taste
1/2 tsp. Cajun spice mix
1 tsp. minced fresh parsley
1 c. grated cheese of your choice

Add bacon pieces to a soup pot over medium heat and cook bacon until crisp and fat is rendered. Remove the bacon from the pot and set it aside. Pour off most of the grease, but do not clean the pot.

Return the hot to medium-high heat and add the onions, carrots, and celery. Stir and cook for 2 minutes or so, then add the diced potatoes. Cook for 5 minutes, seasoning with salt, pepper, and Cajun spice.

Pour in the broth and bring it to a gentle boil. Cook for 10 minutes, or until the potatoes are starting to get tender. Whisk together the flour and the milk, then pour into the soup and allow the soup to cook for another 5 minutes.

Remove half to 2/3 the soup (leaving the rest unblended) and blend in batches in a blender/food process until completely smooth. (**USE CAUTION WHEN BLENDING HOT SOUP; IF POSSIBLE, ALLOW THE SOUP TO COOL BEFORE BLENDING**) Pour it back into the soup pot and stir to combine. Let it heat back up as you taste for seasonings, adding more of what it needs. Stir in cream, then stir in parsley, reserving a little for garnish.

Serve in bowls garnished with parsley, grated cheese and crisp bacon pieces.

Pesto Bean Soup

Level: Easy

Total: 30 min

Active: 15 min

Yield: 4 servings

1 T. extra-virgin olive oil
5 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
A pinch of red pepper flakes
2 cans cannellini beans, drained
3 T. pesto
2 T. grated Parmesan cheese
3 c. chicken broth
1 c. chopped celery
1/2 c. chopped black olives
1/2 c. roasted peppers

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat, 30 seconds. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Stir the cannellini beans and 1 cup of water into the skillet. Simmer over medium heat until the mixture is just thickened, 8 minutes. Stir in the pesto and Parmesan.

Add the chicken broth and celery and cook, stirring occasionally, until the celery is tender, 15 minutes. Stir in the olives and roasted peppers to combine.

Chicken Stew

Level: Easy

Total: 50 min

Prep: 10 min

Inactive: 5 min

Cook: 35 min

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

2 T. olive oil
2 stalks celery, cut into bite-size pcs.

1 carrot, peeled, cut into bite-size pcs.
1 sm. onion, chopped
Salt & freshly ground black pepper
1 (14-1/2 oz.) can chopped tomatoes
1 (14 oz.) can low-salt chicken broth
1/2 c. fresh basil leaves, torn into pieces
1 T. tomato paste
1 bay leaf
1/2 tsp. dried thyme leaves
2 chicken breast with ribs (about 1-1/2 lbs. total)
1 (15 oz.) can organic kidney beans, drained (rinsed if not organic)

Heat the oil in a heavy 5-1/2-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the celery, carrot, and onion. Sauté the vegetables until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Stir in the tomatoes with their juices, chicken broth, basil, tomato paste, bay leaf, and thyme. Add the chicken breasts; press to submerge.

Bring the cooking liquid to a simmer. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer gently uncovered until the chicken is almost cooked through, turning the chicken breasts over and stirring the mixture occasionally, about 25 minutes. Using tongs, transfer the chicken breasts to a work surface and cool for 5 minutes. Discard the bay leaf. Add the kidney beans to the pot and simmer until the liquid has reduced into a stew consistency, about 10 minutes.

Discard the skin and bones from the chicken breasts. Shred or cut the chicken into bite-size pieces. Return the chicken meat to the stew. Bring the stew just to a simmer. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Ladle the stew into serving bowls and serve with the bread.

Serving suggestion: crusty bread.

Sausage Spaghetti Squash Bake

Yields: 4 servings

1 lb. Italian sausage
1 med. spaghetti squash, halved & seeds removed
1 bundle of kale, roughly chopped
1 red onion, halved & sliced
1 egg
1/3 c. chicken broth
1/2 c. canned coconut milk
1 garlic clove, minced
1 T. garlic powder
1 tsp. tarragon
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/4 tsp. ground sage

Preheat your oven to 400 degrees.

Cut your spaghetti squash in half and use a spoon to remove the seeds and excess threads from your squash. Use some muscle.

Place open side down on a baking sheet and bake for about 20-25 minutes or until you can press into your squash and it gives a bit.

While your squash bakes, heat up a large pot under medium-high heat and add your Italian sausage. Break up with a wooden spoon or spatula. Once your sausage is cooked through, remove with a slotted spoon and put in a bowl.

Keep the extra fat from the meat in the pot, add your minced garlic and add your kale, onions, and chicken broth. Combine. Then add your coconut milk and spices. Cover and let simmer for about 5 minutes.

Pull your spaghetti squash out of the oven and dethread with a fork.

Once your kale is wilted and onions have begun to become translucent, remove from heat and add your spaghetti squash, as well as your egg to the kale/onion mixture. Mix thoroughly. Then add your cooked Italian sausage and mix together.

Place the mixed ingredients into a baking dish (or same pot if it's oven safe) and spread out evenly. Bake 15-20 minutes or until top is slightly browned.

Citrus Avocado Spinach Salad

Total Time: 15 min.

Yield: 8 servings

8 c. fresh baby spinach (about 6 oz.)
3 c. refrigerated citrus salad, drained
2 med. ripe avocados, peeled & sliced
1 c. crumbled blue cheese
Toasted sliced almonds, opt.
Salad dressing of your choice, opt.

Divide spinach among 8 plates; top with citrus salad and avocados. Sprinkle with cheese and, if desired, dressing and almonds. Serve immediately.

Pork with Sweet Potatoes

Prep Time: 20 min.

Cook Time: 20 min.
Yield: 4 servings

1/2 c. all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 pork tenderloin (about 1 lb.)
1 T. canola oil
2 med. sweet potatoes (about 1 lb.), peeled & cubed
1/2 c. dried cranberries
1 can (14-1/2 oz.) reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 T. Dijon mustard
1 med. apple, sliced
4 green onions, chopped

In a shallow bowl, mix flour, salt and pepper. Cut tenderloin into 12 slices; pound each with a meat mallet to 1/4-in. thickness. Dip pork in flour mixture to coat both sides; shake off excess.

In a large skillet coated with cooking spray, heat oil over medium-high heat; brown pork in batches. Remove from pan.

Add sweet potatoes, cranberries and broth to same pan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 4-6 minutes or until potatoes are almost tender. Stir in mustard.

Return pork to pan; add apple and green onions. Return to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 4-6 minutes or until pork and sweet potatoes are tender.

Brookies

Yield: 12 - 16 servings
Prep Time: 30 min
Total Time: 2 hrs 20 min

Brownie Batter:

3/4 c. salted butter, plus more for greasing pan
5 oz. dark chocolate bars, chopped
3 T. unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tsp. instant coffee
1-1/4 c. granulated sugar
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 lg. egg + 1 lg. egg yolk
1 c. plus 2 T. all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp. baking powder

Cookie Dough:

1/2 c. salted butter, softened
1/2 c. firmly packed light brown sugar
1/4 c. granulated sugar
1 lg. egg
1-1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1-1/4 c. all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. salt
1 c. chocolate chips, or chopped dark chocolate

Preheat the oven to 350F. Grease a 9x13-inch baking pan and line with parchment paper, leaving two sides longer, that hang about 2-inches over the long sides of the pan.

For the brownie batter: In a medium saucepan, melt the butter on medium-low heat. Add the chopped chocolate, whisking occasionally until smooth and melted. Sprinkle in cocoa powder and instant coffee, and whisk to combine. Remove the pan from heat and let it cool for 5 minutes.

Stir in sugar, vanilla, egg and egg yolk just until just combined. Add the flour and baking powder, and fold in with a rubber spatula just until incorporated. Set aside.

For the cookie dough: In a large mixing bowl, combine the butter and sugars. Beat on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla and beat until combined.

In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking soda, and salt. Add to the butter mixture and beat just until incorporated. Reserve 1/4 cup of the chocolate chips, and mix the remainder into the cookie dough.

Drop the cookie dough and brownie batter by heaping spoonfuls around the prepared pan, alternating the two types of dough. Gently tap the pan on the counter to settle the batter and close up any gaps. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup of chocolate chips.

Bake for 20 minutes, then tent with foil and bake for another 10-15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with a few moist crumbs. Let the brookies cool completely in the pan, about 1 hour. Remove the brookies by pulling on the ends of the parchment paper and transfer them to a cutting board for easy slicing.

Quote of the Week:

“Election Day outside of big cities is different. For one thing, there are so few people in my town that each individual vote really does matter, and several local races have been decided by as many votes as you can count on one hand.”

~Susan Orlean