

**THE FEARLESS OLIVE**  
BY REEMA ISEAM



## Warm, comforting soups

No matter how healthy we eat during the day, late in the afternoon we tend to get peckish and often experience a sudden craving for fried snacks. To steer clear of this rut prior to dinner, it is best to opt for a warm soup that is far more nutritious and will fill you up till the next meal.

Here are some ideas straight from a Mediterranean kitchen to the Fearless Olive column!

### LEEK AND POTATO SOUP

The despotic Italian emperor Nero was very fond of leeks and loved consuming them in a soup, believing it was beneficial for his voice. Now unless you are not already fond of leeks, this could be a great reason to try out these fattened spring-onion look-alikes.

#### Ingredients

2 large leeks, cut in round slices  
4 large potatoes (Russet potato or the white ones are ideal but any available will also do)  
1-2 spring onions  
1 tbsp chives to sprinkle on top or any herbs like chopped mint or parsley  
Salt and pepper to taste  
3 tbsp olive oil

#### Method

Fry the leek's white parts in olive oil for 2 minutes then add the potatoes (boiled with some salt) and fry them for up to 1 minute. Add enough water at this stage to cover the potatoes and add chopped spring onion bulbs (white parts). Let it come to a boil and let simmer for about 3 minutes. Mash the potatoes or blend the soup (cool it first) in a blender then return to fire and add water to reach your desired soup consistency. Add salt and pepper. You may add a tsp of apple cider vinegar or lemon juice at this stage.

#### Serving

Garnish with chives or parsley and serve hot or cold, it tastes delicious either ways.

### Health benefits

Leeks are an excellent source of fibre, aid digestion and have cancer preventive effects, as it contains allyl sulfides. Leeks are also great at iron absorption as they are high in Vitamins C, K and E.

### HAITIAN BOUILLON SOUP

Haitian cuisine is a merry mix of French, Spanish, African and local recipes, together often termed as creole cuisine. These dishes incorporate local flavours with all the cultures that have influenced them and this soup mixes beef with some sweet potato.

#### Ingredients

½ kg cubed beef (bite sized cubes)  
2 large onions (sliced finely)  
4-5 spring onions (chopped thick)  
5-6 garlic cloves, roughly crushed and a tbsp of crushed ginger  
½ tsp cloves (lobongo); 2 bay leaves; handful parsley; 1 tbsp thyme; 1 tbsp chopped celery  
½ tsp cinnamon powder, ½ tsp black or rock salt, ½ tsp cumin powder, 2 green chillies  
2 carrots peeled and sliced  
1-2 sweet potatoes cut into chunks  
2 green bananas  
1 handful each of spinach, water spinach (kalmi shaak)  
1 tsp of Nigella seeds or (kalo jeera) paste  
½ cup soup macaroni  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Olive oil

#### Method

Marinate meat with the sliced onions, garlic, salt and pepper for a minimum of 1 hour in the refrigerator. Brown the meat with this marinade in a pot and let it simmer slowly for about 10 minutes. Slowly add the vegetables and cook for about 5 minutes; add the spices and cook for another 10 minutes. At this point, add enough water and let it

cook for about half an hour. The outcome should be a thick soup with a lot of body.

### AVGOLEMONO (LEMON SAUCE)

#### GREEK SOUP

The Sephardic Jews inhabiting Spain and Portugal eventually moved to other Mediterranean countries as well and they are mostly credited for this thick, luscious soup.

#### Ingredients

4 cups chicken broth  
¼ cup rice, use a small grained type  
Salt and pepper to taste  
3 eggs  
3 tablespoons lemon juice

#### Method

For the broth, boil one whole chicken with salt, pepper, pinch of cumin powder (zeera), 1 tbsp garlic paste, 2 tbsp chopped celery and 2 bay leaves. In a large saucepan, bring the broth to a boil. Add the rice and cook for about 20 minutes, so it is tender but al dente. Season with the salt and pepper and reduce heat to low. While this is simmering at low heat, whisk together the eggs and lemon juice until smooth. Ladle about 1 cup of the hot broth into the egg-and-lemon mixture, then whisk to combine. Add the mixture back to the rest of the soup on the fire and stir until it turns opaque and thickens as the eggs cook, 1 to 2 minutes. Add more salt and pepper, if desired, and serve.

#### Serving

Add a swirl of olive oil and some croutons for an added crunch or simply consume it with some bread.

### RIBOLLITA

The Italians love reshaping their food and re-use left overs into a soup, which literally means "re-boiled". The recipes differ according to the region but it mostly contains bread, beans and some staple vegetables.

We can easily be conscientious about the

food we waste and re-use ingredients into an Italian soup.

#### Ingredients

2 large onions  
2 carrots  
1 tbsp chopped celery  
3-4 cloves of garlic roughly chopped  
200g of tomatoes, peeled and chopped roughly  
Handful of spinach or any leafy green would do  
2-3 bay leaves  
1 cup boiled cannellini or white beans  
Olive oil  
Salt and pepper to taste

1 large loaf of bread (you should ideally use a brown bread but you may use any leftover bread)

You may add any amount of vegetables to this soup like gourds (lau, kumra, chichinga) long yard beans (borboti), pumpkin, etc.

#### Method

Fry onions and garlic for about 1 minute then add the carrots and celery and cook for another minute. At this point, add the tomatoes and cook for up to 5 minutes then add the beans and cook for about 2 minutes. Add salt, pepper, cumin powder and cook for another 2 minutes then add enough water to cover (you may use the water left over after boiling the beans). Add the bay leaves and let this simmer for about 20 minutes. Add the spinach or leafy green at this point and let it wilt in the heat of the soup then tear up the bread and add it into the soup. Take off the heat.

#### Serving

Add a generous swirl of virgin olive oil and grate some parmesan on top and garnish with herbs before serving. Add any vegetables to this soup as it is ideal for clearing out the fridge and using ingredients efficiently!

**Photo: Collected**