

clover food lab



How to wing it when it comes to soup

Lucia here, kicking off meal prep Monday with one of my very favorite foods for meal prep: SOUP! All week we'll be focusing on soup, and we hope you find some time to whip up a batch.

Some people get caught up on recipes, but the truth is if you memorize a few building blocks, you can make soup out of what you have in your crisper, what looks fresh and delicious at the store, or what you got in your CSA share.

What follows is a very rough guide, more of an outline than an exact recipe. The last time I shared this around, one of our regular customers at MIT, Josh, named it the Soup Order of Operations, and I will henceforth refer to it as that.

SOUP ORDER OF OPERATIONS

O + G + H + W + time + seasoning = Soup

1. Peel and chop up some **onions** and get them sauteeing in a bit of oil (you can do olive or a neutral oil) over low-medium heat. You can even do this before you've decided what else will be in your soup. If you don't have onions, no worries! Use an onion-y thing, like a few shallots, a leek, or a handful of green onions. Stir your onions every few minutes so they don't stick to the pan, or get too much browning. If you have them on hand, you can also add some chopped carrots and celery with the onions. This will make a classic mirepoix, the starting point for many French/European soups.
2. After about 5 minutes, the onions (or onion-y things) should start to smell sweet and be translucent but not browned. At this point you could add some **garlic** (minced for a sharper taste, sliced or smashed whole for a sweeter taste). Cook that for a bit until it starts to smell amazing and people start to wander in from off the street saying "What smells so good?"
3. Now it's time to add a **hearty element**, the star of your soup, something that would do well with being boiled a bit. For example, sweet potatoes cut into bite-sized chunks. Or squash, peeled and diced. Or regular potatoes. Or some beans you've soaked overnight. Now pour stock over your hearty item, making sure to cover it by a few inches, cause you're making a soup. If you don't have stock, you could use water - that's totally fine; you'll just need to season it a bit more at the end.
4. Turn up the heat and bring the liquid to a boil, then turn it down to a brisk simmer.
5. Add a pinch of ground spices if you have some around that you love. These will help to nudge the soup in a certain direction (maybe some turmeric and garam masala would taste nice with those sweet potatoes, or maybe those beans would taste good with a little paprika?) Don't add too much, you can always add more later.
6. Gently simmer until the hearty element is tender. This takes a different amount of time depending on what hearty element you're using. At that point, see if you have some nice greens (kale, chard, spinach?) or other non-hearty elements. By non-hearty I mean items that would not hold up well to boiling - that's why you add them towards the end.
7. Time to season your soup. **This is the step that separates a meh soup from a great soup.** Gather the following 3 ingredients: **salt, vinegar, sugar** (yes sugar, don't worry). Working slowly, a big pinch or little glug at a time, add salt, vinegar, and sugar to your soup. Do this over and over and KEEP TASTING until it's so good that you don't want to stop eating. The salt, sugar, and vinegar will harmonize with each other, bringing out the flavors of your veggies. At this point you could blend your soup if you want it to be creamy (I like a stick blender or a Vitamix) or you could leave it as-is, what we call brothy at Clover.
8. Don't forget about **garnishes**. They can bring in a lot of freshness, crunch, and most importantly, fat, which is often missed in plant-based soups (big mistake). What would taste good? A drizzle of yogurt? A fresh herb or two?
9. Serve and enjoy!



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Clover Food Lab 1075 Cambridge St Cambridge, MA 02139