

# WINNING SOUPS

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**TAKE STOCK** A shortcut to great soup is to make your own stock from leftover chicken, turkey, beef or vegetables (see how at [armagazine.com/make-stock](http://armagazine.com/make-stock)). But if you don't have leftovers, you can still intensify the flavor by searing or roasting bones and veggies before adding water and simmering for a few hours. If you use store-bought stock or broth, go with the low-sodium option so you control the seasoning. (Even though the terms are often used interchangeably, stock is made by simmering water with bones, and broth takes the stock a step further by adding meat and more seasonings.)

## **BOOST FLAVORS**

- Roasting vegetables before adding them to a soup adds depth of flavor.
- Parmesan cheese rinds give amazing flavor to vegetable soups. Save your rinds in the refrigerator and toss one in when you simmer soup. It adds saltiness, so taste before seasoning at the end. And remove the rind before serving.
- It matters when you add the salt. For example, sprinkling salt on vegetables before roasting gives the salt time to penetrate and pull out natural flavors. But adjusting salt to your taste should be done at the end. For more details, check out [armagazine.com/when-to-add-salt](http://armagazine.com/when-to-add-salt). If your soup is too salty, add a squeeze of citrus, dilute with water or, depending on the type of soup, add a little cream or potato.

## **TOAST THE SPICES**

Brief cooking in a dry pan deepens the flavor of whole spices and it's traditional in many Indian and Middle Eastern dishes. To toast spices, heat a heavy pan over medium-low heat, add the whole spices in a single layer, and stir constantly to avoid burning, 2 to 4 minutes. Remove the spices from the pan immediately to stop the cooking. Let the spices cool, then grind them.

As soup liquid comes to a simmer, fat and foam may rise to the surface (depending on the kind of soup). Remove it with a wide, shallow spoon. It's best to do it before the soup comes to a boil so it doesn't reincorporate into the liquid and cloud the soup.

## **THICKEN IT**

- If your soup turns out thinner than you would like, here are ways to thicken it:
- Blend all or part of the soup, except for the meat, with an immersion blender. If you use a regular blender, do not fill it all the way to avoid splatters and burns. This works best with soups that have starchy ingredients like potatoes, rice or beans.
- Whisk together one tablespoon of cornstarch or flour in a small bowl with enough water to make a thin slurry. Stir it into the soup and let it come to a simmer.
- *Beurre Manie'* – a flour/butter paste – thickens soup as it simmers. Mash together equal parts of butter and flour to make a thick paste (start with one tablespoon each) and stir into the soup.
- Cream or yogurt can thicken, but because they can get finicky, check out (Avoid Curdling) below.
- Blitz some bread in a blender and stir in the fine crumbs. Add peeled cubes of russet or Idaho potatoes and let them cook down. (Or cook them separately, mash, and stir into the soup.) Cooked rice or pasta also thickens soup when simmered in it.

## **PUREE' IT**

Remove any whole herbs and spices, ladle a cup or two of the liquid into measuring cup, then blend the rest of the solids and liquid into a blender. (Or use an immersion blender.) Thin with the reserved liquid as needed.

## **AVOID CURDLING**

Soups thickened and enriched with dairy can curdle unless you follow these three tips:

- Use full-fat milk, yogurt, or cream – they don't separate and curdle as easily as low-fat dairy products.
- Add the dairy at the very end.
- Temper: Take the soup off the heat. Stir ½ cup of hot soup liquid into the milk, yogurt or cream to warm it

slightly before adding it back to the soup. Heat the soup until steaming, but do not let it boil.

### TOP IT OFF

Fresh, creamy, zippy or crunchy garnishes give any soup extra eye appeal, texture and flavor. They can be as simple as minced herbs, seasoned croutons, grated cheese, citrus zest, or toasted nuts.

### STORE IT SMARTLY

Whether for storing or sharing, keep grain-based ingredients – such as noodles, rice or barley – separate from the liquid. If stored together, they will soak up a lot of the liquid. When ready to serve, just ladle hot soup over them and heat as needed.