

Chickpea Chowder

Whatever the season, soups are just an excellent way to eat! For the health-conscious eater, especially those going through a lifestyle modification involving weight reduction, soup can be a way to introduce creativity and variety as well as satisfaction into your diet. A small, but well-structured study attested to the high degree of satisfaction derived from soups leading subjects to consume almost 30% less calories when presented soup as opposed to the same food items in a different form.^{1, 2, 3} Soup is almost an essential dietary component of any lifestyle modification protocol!

Soups are traditionally one of the very first areas that apprentice cooks are given a chance to express their individual style and demonstrate their ability to work proficiently with ingredient variables.

For me, soups provided a much-needed creative outlet during my transition from a line cook with a job to a professional chef with a career. Learning to cook can seem like an endless repetition of mindless basic culinary technique; creating soup offers a chance to use all those skills to actually make something exciting that you can share with others!

Onions	2 medium
Celery	4-5 stalks
Green pepper	2 large
Thyme	To Taste 1 Tablespoon
Black Pepper	To Taste 1 teaspoon
Garlic	To Taste 1-2 Tablespoons
Reserved Cooking Liquid	As Needed
Mushroom stems & pieces with liquid	1 Can
Stewed Tomatoes	(1) #10 Can
Better Than Bullion No-Chicken Base	To Taste
Better Than Bullion Ham Base	To Taste
Corn Starch Slurry	As Needed To Thicken
Cauliflower	1 head
Cooked Gold potatoes	6-8 medium
Cooked Chickpeas	About 4 Cups

Soup can be a real money-saver as well! Almost always made from the most humble ingredients, soups are an ideal place to utilize leftovers, scraps, and reserved cooking liquids.

Chickpea chowder is a very low-fat, take-off on the tomato-based Manhattan clam chowder. It's an extremely fast soup that lends itself easily to variation. My version expands on the classic chowder flavor combination of onion, celery, garlic, and thyme in a tomato broth with potato by adding chickpeas, mushrooms, and cauliflower; they don't make soups more basic than this one. If you can cook my tomato soup, you can cook this one even though it looks more complicated.

Chickpeas cook quickly, so you don't need a pressure cooker; it helps with time and storage space, though. I use a 3.5-liter pressure cooker to make a batch with 2 pounds of chickpeas. Add as much water as you can into the pressure cooker or pot; we want plenty of cooking liquid to use as the base for the soup. Pressure cook for about 20 minutes, strain, and shock the beans, reserving the liquid; we'd like the chickpeas to bite back a little bit to offer texture variance. I often cook a little more than 2 pounds of beans so that I can take some out to make a chickpea salad on the same day to save time in the kitchen; the soup does fine with as little as $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cooked beans, so by all means make a salad as well. If you are not using a pressure cooker, soak the beans in water overnight and wash them thoroughly before cooking. Soaked, the beans should only take no more 40 minutes to cook. If you don't soak the beans you're looking at well over an hour. Not having to mess with soaking beans is another good reason to use a pressure cooker. How many of us have room in our home refrigerator to store soaked beans?

Once you start this soup, it moves quickly, so it's essential to have all the ingredients cut and ready before you begin. This is something called "mise en place," a French culinary term meaning "everything in its place." In a

much broader sense, it refers to the discipline and organization skills demonstrated by a professional chef in the kitchen. Understanding and practicing *mise en place* is something that every serious home cook should borrow from the professional chef. It is a mandatory prerequisite to learning how to cook well.

This is not a finesse soup, so chop quickly, leaving the vegetables in pretty large chunks. Keep in mind that the soup will be reheated several times over the course of the following week, and larger cuts will hold their shape and texture better. It might be a little crunchy on Sunday, so it isn't all mush on Friday. Pay attention to harder vegetables like celery; it's one of the vegetables that may take substantially longer to cook in the winter months; in the dead of winter, when celery is especially stringy, you might want to actually peel your celery. Pay attention to what you are cooking. Harder vegetables need to be cooked longer and, therefore, go into the process sooner than softer vegetables. Every time you cook, the circumstances will change. A good cook learns to adjust the cooking method according to the current state of the ingredients. I call this "conscious cooking," and it goes hand in hand with something called conscious eating, which is a mindful approach to eating that emphasizes paying attention to your body's signals. To be a good cook, you must cook mindfully, paying attention to what your ingredients are telling you!

Once the chickpeas are cooked, the second order of business is to cook the potatoes and have them ready to add when needed. I prefer to use gold potatoes because they have more flavor than white ones and add color as well. I like to leave the skins on. I generally cut the small ones in half and quarter the larger ones.

You have a choice on how to cook this soup. If you are on a fat-free diet or simply want to eliminate every calorie you can, start the soup by heating the reserved chickpea cooking liquid, as well as any other saved cooking liquids. Pasta water makes an excellent base for any soup! Never throw pasta water away! Add the vegetables and allow them to simmer in the liquid. When the vegetables start to soften and release their flavor, add the stewed tomatoes, mushroom stems, and pieces, along with the water from the can, garlic, and herbs. Let the soup simmer for a bit longer. I would add some soup bases now. There are 100% vegan soup bases available if you prefer them, but the added umami that the Better Than Bouillon soup bases provide makes this chickpea chowder something I look forward to, rather than just tolerate because I have to. I use a combination of ham, chicken, and mushroom. Taste the soup as you go and add bases little by little until you achieve the flavor you desire. Move quickly to thickening. Prepare a cornstarch slurry. If this is new to you, please watch the attached video. Once the soup is thickened, add the cooked potatoes and chickpeas.

If consuming some fat doesn't bother you, start by heating a hot pan, adding no more than a tablespoon or two of extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO), and then sauté your vegetables with thyme and black pepper. Add the garlic late in the process when you are sure it will not burn. If you are not accustomed to moving quickly in the kitchen, reduce the heat on the pan as you proceed to avoid burning the vegetables. Add the reserved chickpea water as previously described and proceed in the same manner.

You can buy Better Than Bouillon soup bases at Gene's grocery store. Look for the Steve's Good Grab label on the shelf!

With practice this soup will take about 40 minutes from start to finish and if you're smart you'll have a chic pea *salad* done at the same time as well!

¹ Bell EA, Rolls BJ. Effect of water content of food on satiety. *FASEB Journal*. 1999;13:A870.

² Rolls BJ, Bell EA, Thorwart ML. Water incorporated into a food but not served with a food decreases energy intake in lean women. *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 1999;70:448-455.

³ Mattes R. Soup and Satiety. *Physiol Behav.* 2005;83(5):739-47.