

Chilled Soups:

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In the summertime when gardens are bursting with ripened vegetables, fruit, and herbs, chilled soups add an interesting culinary dimension to our warm weather menu. At this time of the year, it is a welcome revelation to discover the infinite variety of cold soups that are consumed in many different cultures around the world. These recipes range from the delicate velvety flavour of Vichyssoise, to the rustic and chunky combination of vegetables that make up Gazpacho. Not surprisingly, cold soups are increasing in popularity and in number on restaurant menus in Vancouver.

The beauty of cold soup is that it is nutritious and visually appealing. Using ripe ingredients from the garden, patio, or farmer's market, cold soups are filled with vitamins and intense in flavour. Recipes can be varied according to the region or season. Minestrone, for example, is a classic Italian vegetable soup that is traditionally served hot but can also be served at room temperature. Depending on its origin, whether it's Naples, Rome or Milan, the seasonings as well as the ingredients can vary, thus altering the flavour as well as the appearance of the recipe. Many adaptations of this recipe exist. The classic Vichyssoise, which has a base of leeks and potatoes can be altered by adding any number of different ingredients. In Russia, there is a magnificent magenta coloured soup, pleasing to both the eye and to the taste buds, that is made from beets, cloves and onions which are simmered in broth and buttermilk and then chilled with sour cream and parsley garnishes.

Lovely to look at and delicious to eat, cold soup is also convenient. Most chilled soups can be prepared well in advance and then chilled for 4-6 hours before serving. They can even be portioned out before the guests arrive so that there is a minimum of last minute fuss before entertaining. Some soups do not even require cooking like Indian Pachadi which is a combination of finely chopped onion, ripe tomatoes, yogurt, chilli pepper and cilantro, blended together and chilled. Another classic, Gazpacho, is really just a liquid salad. Originally it was created by farmers using whatever ripe vegetables were on hand and then seasoning them with fresh olive oil, red wine vinegar, and herbs. Nowadays, the ingredients are just chopped coarsely by hand or in the food processor. Then as the soup is chilled, the flavours all seem to work together. However since most flavours and seasonings tend to lose their intensity when chilled, it is best to add salt, spices, or acidic ingredients like lemon juice or vinegar just before serving.

Chilled soups are refreshing and cooling in hot weather. Jellied soups with their slippery smooth texture reminiscent of jell-o are particularly soothing in the summer months. Beef Madrilene is a classic jellied soup which requires an excellent stock in which all the gelatine has been extracted from the bones; this stock is then infused with herbs and spices such as citrus zest, star anise, or tarragon. Sherry is added, and the soup is then chilled for several hours. Sparkling cubes of jellied consommé that have been seasoned with freshly ground pepper and lemon juice are a cooling start to any summer meal. For

dessert, the popular fruit soups of Scandinavia and Russia are elegant, refreshing, and visually appealing.

Summer Berry Soup (Danish)

1 lb. mixed berries

2 ½ c. water

2 ½ c. rose` wine

¼ c. sugar

2 ½ tbsp. lemon juice

1/3 c. tapioca

Prepare berries. Bring water and wine to the boil. Add sugar and lemon juice. Add tapioca. Stir well and simmer for 15 mins. Add berries. Cook for 5 mins. more until berries soften but still have shape. Chill well.