LECTURE 17: SOUPS

Soups have held an important place in the cuisine of every culture since the dawn of humanity. Its ingredients and preparation are a reflection of the customs and economics of the times. A soup is a basic assemblage of proteins, starches, vegetables, and liquid that's been perfected into silken bisques, refined consommés, and hearty minestrone. All soups are permutations of the same minor miracle: water transformed into a meal. Although the role of soup has remained unchanged for at least 10,000 years modern cooking has replaced the sturdy dishes of the past with simple, savoury preparations. Taking almost a century to bring soups to the perfection of today. Good soup is still the ultimate food for stimulating our appetites, nourishing our bodies, and sustaining our spirits.

The variety of ingredients, seasoning and garnishes that can be used for soups are virtually endless, provided you understand the basic procedures for making different kinds of soup. Great soups can be made from the finest and most expensive ingredients or from leftovers from the previous evening's dinner service and trimmings from the day’s production. But poor quality ingredients make poor-quality soups. A soup’s quality is determined by its flavour, appearance and texture - a good soup being full flavoured. The flavours from each of the soup's ingredients should blend together and complement each other, with no flavour overpowering another. Soups are often served as the first course and can ultimately determine the success or failure of an entire meal.

SOUP CLASSIFICATION

CLEAR SOUPS
A crystal clear soup made from well-flavoured, jellied stock that has been simmered with a combination of ingredients known as a clarification. It is completely fat free, amber-coloured with a good body and fragrance. A consommé is a stock or broth that has been clarified to remove impurities so that it is crystal clear. Well-prepared consommés should be rich in the flavour of the main ingredient, they should have substantial body as a result of their high gelatin content, and all consommés should be perfectly clear with no traces of fat. Although making a consommé requires a certain level of skill while also being time consuming the thin, clear soup makes a good first course, stimulating the appetite in a subtle manner.

BROTHS
Broths are among the simplest soups to prepare. Like stocks, broths are prepared by simmering flavouring ingredients in a liquid. They derive their flavour from long simmering of all the ingredients together in one pot. These soups are wholesome rather than delicate. Often the basic liquid is cold water since the ingredients contribute their flavour to the liquid during the prolonged cooking process, but a full flavoured broth results when a stock and not just water is used as the liquid. Proper temperature, skimming and straining help produce well flavoured, clear broths. Common garnishes for broths are chopped or finely minced fresh herbs.

STOCK VS. BROTH?
Broths are made with meat instead of just bones and broths can be served as finished dishes, while stocks are generally used to prepare other items.

BROTH-BASED SOUPS
Broths are often used as bases for such familiar soups as chicken noodle and beef barley. A broth-based vegetable soup is a soup in which the vegetables (and meats) are cooked directly in the broth, adding flavour, body and texture to the finished product. When making broth-based soups, each ingredient is added at the proper time so that all the ingredients are cooked when the soup is finished. The ingredients must cook long enough to add their flavours and soften sufficiently but not so long that they lose their identity and become too soft or mushy.
CREAM SOUPS
Most cream soups are made by simmering the main flavouring ingredient in a white stock or thin velouté sauce to which seasonings have been added. The mixture is then puréed and strained. These soups are thickened with flour, which may be added as a roux, as beurre manié or, occasionally, as a slurry. Whatever the method, the flour must be thoroughly cooked or the soup will taste of raw flour. After the consistency has been adjusted, the soup is finished by adding cream. All cream soups are finished with milk or cream.

VELOUTÉ-BASED SOUPS
Practically speaking, the preparation of cream soups and Velouté-based soups are basically the same. However, a Velouté-based soup differs from a cream soup in that the foundation, as the name suggests, is always a Velouté sauce. The Velouté sauce must be in harmony with the nature of the ingredients of the soup being prepared. In addition, the final finishing of a Velouté-based soup is a liaison, differing from a cream soup where it is strictly cream that is used to finish it.

PUREED SOUPS
Purée soups are hearty soups made by cooking starchy vegetables or legumes in a stock or broth, then puréeing all or a portion of them to thicken the soup. The secret of these soups is thorough cooking so that the starchy ingredients which give it body is well blended. The consistency of a puréed soup varies according to the ingredients used and the way in which they are processed. Purée soups are similar to cream soups in that they both consist of a main ingredient that is first cooked in a liquid, and then puréed. The primary difference is that unlike cream soups, which are thickened with starch, purée soups generally do not use additional starch for thickening. A purée soup can be made thicker by puréeing all or part of the solid ingredients.

CHOWDERS
Although chowders are usually associated with the United States where fish and clams are plentiful, they are of French origin. Chowders are hearty, thick and chunky stew-like soups made from fish, shellfish and vegetables, usually containing milk, potatoes and corn. It is often thickened with a roux. The procedures for making chowders are similar to those for making cream soups except that chowders are not puréed and strained before the cream/milk is added.

BISQUES
Traditional bisques are shellfish soups thickened with cooked rice. Today bisques are prepared using a combination of the cream and purée soup procedures. They are generally made from shrimp, lobster or crayfish and are thickened with a roux instead of rice for better stability and consistency. When making bisques the essence of a single ingredient is concentrated into a rich perfumed soup. Much of a bisques’ flavour comes from crustacean shells. Pureeing the shells and returning them to the soup also adds the thickness and grainy texture associated with this specific soup. Bisques are enriched with cream and can be finished with butter for additional richness while they are usually garnished with the diced flesh from the appropriate shellfish.

COLD SOUPS
The popularity of cold soups has increased in recent years, as the dining public has become more willing to experiment with new trends. Many soups that are prepared to be a hot soup can be changed into a cold soup by simply chilling them well and making minor alterations to the structure and flavour. Chilling affects both the consistency and flavour of a soup. Vichysoise, probably the most popular of all cold soups, is a cold version of purée of potato-leek soup. Cold soups should have a thinner consistency than hot soups. Cold dulls the sense of taste, so cold soups require more seasoning than hot ones.

FRUIT SOUPS
Fruit soup is a soup prepared using fruit as a primary ingredient, and may be served warm or cold depending on the recipe. Some fruit soups use several varieties of fruit, and alcoholic beverages such as rum, sherry and kirsch (a fruit brandy) may be used. Fruit soup is sometimes served as a dessert.
GARNISHING SOUPS
Garnishes can range from a simple sprinkle of chopped parsley to tiny profiteroles stuffed with foie gras adorning a crystal clear bowl of consommé. Some soups are so full of attractive, flavourful and colourful foods that are integral parts of the soup that no additional garnishes are necessary. Although some soups (particularly consommés) have traditional garnishes, many soups depend on the chef’s imagination and the kitchen’s inventory for the finishing garnish. Any garnishes that are added should contribute to the appearance and character of the finished soup.

SOUP CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOUP CLASSIFICATION</th>
<th>FLAVOURING INGREDIENTS</th>
<th>STOCK</th>
<th>THICKENER</th>
<th>FINISHING INGREDIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bisque</td>
<td>Crustacean</td>
<td>White stock/broth of flavouring ingredients</td>
<td>Roux, rice or rice flour</td>
<td>Cream, brandy &amp; dry sherry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purée</td>
<td>Dried legumes or vegetables</td>
<td>Stock</td>
<td>Purée of flavoring ingredient</td>
<td>Cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cream</td>
<td>Vegetables, meat or fish purée</td>
<td>White stock or milk</td>
<td>White roux, Potato</td>
<td>Cream, ½ &amp; ½ or milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velouté</td>
<td>Vegetable, meat or fish purée</td>
<td>White stock</td>
<td>Roux (blond/ straw)</td>
<td>Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chowder</td>
<td>Fish or mollusk, corn</td>
<td>Fish stock or broth of flavouring ingredient</td>
<td>Roux or potato</td>
<td>Cream, ½ &amp; ½, milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear</td>
<td>Fish, chicken, beef or vegetables</td>
<td>White or brown stock</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Usually none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearty broth</td>
<td>Fish, chicken, beef, vegetables and/or farinaceous products</td>
<td>White or brown stock</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CLASSICAL SOUPS

BORSCHT
Borscht is a soup originally from Russia and Poland that was spread throughout Europe by Russian emigrants in the 1920’s. The standard preparation is based on stewing meat, with beetroot adding its typical colour and characteristics. Meatier Borscht is traditionally more Polish, with the Russians preferring more beetroot added to the soup. Basically it is a purée soup that may be served either hot or cold finished with yoghurt or sour cream.

GAZPACHO
Gazpacho is an uncooked tomato based soup served chilled and often thickened with bread, which has its origin in the Andalusia region in the south of Spain. It is served in almost every home and restaurant throughout Spain, with recipe’s and methods differing from region to region. It is a refreshing and spicy soup often served with little bowls of chopped salad vegetables and bread. Traditionally it is served on ice to keep it chilled.

CRÊME VICHYSOISE
Crème Vichysoise is very famous cold, creamy potato and leek soup. It is the creation of French Chef Louis Diat who was for many years the executive chef of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in New York. Named after “Vichy”, a famous spa near his hometown in France in tribute to the fine cuisine in that region. In his search for a new cold snack to entice customers with, he remembered how his mother used to cool her soups by adding cold rich milk. He then added some fresh cream and chopped chives to a leftover potato soup to create the now well-known Vichysoise.

COCK-A-LEEKIE
Cock-a-leekie is soup made with chicken broth, chicken pieces and leeks. It originated in Scotland and forms part of the great tradition of Scottish cooking. It is a broth-based soup that gets served as a thin broth with the chicken, it is often thickened with oatmeal and garnished with prunes.
CORN CHOWDER
Mostly associated with America, although the word derives from the French “chaudière” which refers to a cauldron in which the fisherman made their sea stews. Chowder is a thick, rich soup that contains fish, shellfish and whole corn. Fresh corn imparts a rich, sweet flavour to this thick chunky soup and it is often thickened with potatoes.

ERTWENSOP
Green split pea soup of Dutch origin. A purée soup, usually with the addition of a rich, fatty meat in the form of bacon, ham hock, sausage meat or even just lard pieces.

MANSAHARI MIRCHI
Originally from the southern parts of India, Mansahari is a very spicy soup containing chillies, garlic, onion, ginger, spices, carrots, apple and lamb or chicken. Traditionally it is finished with unsweetened coconut milk.

FRENCH ONION SOUP
French Onion soup is one of the most famous of all French soups and forms part of everyday Parisian fare. Its popularity is based on its simplicity in flavour and texture. It is a good, wholesome thick broth made from julienne of onions and good quality brown stock. Traditionally it is served with baguette croutes and gratinéed with Gruyere cheese.

BOUILLABAISE
A fish broth that is a specialty dear to the south-eastern part of France. It is a meal in itself. Although the origin is the French Mediterranean coast this soups will differ from region to region. The soup contains a selection of fish and seafood that is cooked in a highly flavoured stock with spices and herbs. Saffron is added to impart the distinctive golden colour and flavour. It is often served with baguette croutes and rouille, a spicy mayonnaise.

MINESTRONE
A thick, rich Italian vegetable soup that most often include pasta or rice. Literally it means “substantial or large” soup. It is one of the cornerstones of the Italian cuisine and usually there’s no set recipe, since it is made from whatever vegetables are in season. Common ingredients include onion, celery, beans, carrots, tomatoes and stock.

GUMBO
Gumbo is the pride of the state of Louisiana. It is a thick, spicy stew that’s a traditional fare in the region of the American South. Gumbo is as much a stew as it is a soup and is traditionally served with white rice. Gumbo is usually made with poultry, fish, shellfish or sausage and thickened with a dark roux. Okra or ground sassafras leaves may also be added for thickening.

MULLIGATAWNY
Mulligatawny is chicken curry soup of Indian origin. Translated literally Mulligatawny means “pepper water”. Despite the name, pepper itself is not a vital ingredient. There are many variations on this soup but it has a turmeric yellow colour and is garnished with parsley and chicken or lamb meat. Rice and noodles are commonly served in the soup.

SHARK FIN SOUP
Shark fin soup is a broth made from dried shark fins. It’s a Chinese delicacy commonly served as part of a Chinese feast, usually at special occasions such as weddings and banquets. Shark fins are priced for their texture and not their flavour, which are apparently very bland. It is a very controversial dish due to the ethical issues surrounding the practice of shark finning, being a primary contributing factor in the global decline of many shark species.

MISO SOUP
Miso soup is a traditional Japanese broth where the base consists out of a stock called dashi (stock made from soaking dried kelp and dried smoked tuna) into which is mixed a softened miso (made from fermented rice, barley or soy beans) paste. Many other ingredients are added depending on regional and seasonal
preferences but according to custom, solid ingredients added should provide contrasts of colour, texture and flavour. Japanese recipes usually call for the most vegetables and meats to be cooked in the simmering dashi, particularly mushrooms, daikon, carrots, potatoes, tofu and fish. In Japan, miso soup and white rice make up the central dish of the traditional Japanese breakfast. The soup is usually served in bowls with lids and drunk directly from the bowl, the solid ingredients are eaten with chopsticks.
**BIRD’S NEST SOUP**

Bird’s Nest soup is a broth made from bird’s nest and it is a delicacy in Chinese cuisine. A few species of swifts are renowned for building the saliva nests used to produce the unique texture of this soup. The edible bird’s nests are among the most expensive animal products to be consumed by humans. When dissolved the nest have a gelatinous texture. The nests are supposedly rich in nutrients, which are traditionally believed to provide health benefits.

**CONSOMMÉ**

A consommé is a concentrated, thin, clear soup made from meat, poultry or fish, which has gone through a special clarification process. It is served hot, or cold, and normally at the beginning of the dinner meal. Consommé is one of the most sophisticated of all stock based soups.

**CLARIFICATION PROCESS**

The clarification process is simple. Well-flavoured, fat-free stock is brought slowly to a boil while a clarification mixture is whisked in. The clarification mixture is a combination of lean ground meat, egg whites, mirepoix, herbs and spices, and tomato or other acidic ingredients. An acid, such as tomato, is added just before the stock is blended into the clarification to help the raft form properly, as well as for its flavour. All of these ingredients serve multiple functions in preparing a well-balanced consommé.

As the albumin in the egg whites and the ground meat in the clarification mixture cooks, it expands and rises to the top of the stock. It forms a gray froth of coagulated proteins, which form a filter. This is called the raft. The consommé is left to simmer for approximately an hour. This allows the impurities to percolate through the filter, leaving the liquid consommé crystal clear and sparkling. While the egg whites clarify the liquid, they also absorb flavour. Ground or finely chopped vegetables are added to the stock. They provide flavour to the consommé and body to the raft. As well, ground meats are added. The blood in the meats adds flavour and act as a clarifying agent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INGREDIENTS</th>
<th>PRIMARY FUNCTION</th>
<th>SECONDARY FUNCTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good quality, cold stock</td>
<td>Base</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>Flavour</td>
<td>Clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirepoix</td>
<td>Flavour</td>
<td>Raft support, meshed together to form a network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato product</td>
<td>Acid denature protein</td>
<td>Acidic balance in flavour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg whites</td>
<td>Clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg shells</td>
<td>Clarification</td>
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</table>

**TECHNIQUE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST STAGE</th>
<th>SECOND STAGE</th>
<th>THIRD STAGE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mix clarification ingredients together and process until fine</td>
<td>4. Heat agitation will cause the proteins to coagulate and push them to the surface</td>
<td>7. Don't boil too fast: raft will Disintegrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Add to cold stock and bring to boil while stirring continuously to prevent the proteins from sticking to the bottom</td>
<td>5. The raft formed from the coagulated proteins will form a “lid” and the convection current will support it</td>
<td>8. Don't boil too slow: raft will collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stirring also brings the impurities into contact with the proteins</td>
<td>6. The raft is formed on the surface and will continue to shrink; simmer 25min.</td>
<td>9. Create a hole to “peep” and monitor the clarification process</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10. Add salt and sherry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. Strain the consommé very carefully as not to break up the raft</td>
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</tbody>
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EVALUATING A CONSOMMÉ

A consommé of excellent quality has a well-balanced, rich, full, deep flavour, reflecting the flavour of the major ingredient, and a discernible body. It is perfectly clear, completely fat-free and aromatic. The selection of fresh, high quality ingredients, having the clarification ingredients and stock as cold as possible when combined with the stock, the proper relationship of flavouring ingredients and aromatics to liquid, adequate cooking time, careful regulation of heat as the broth simmers and careful skimming throughout cooking time result in the highest quality consommé possible.

COMMON CAUSES OF A CLOUDY CONSOMMÉ

- Poor quality or greasy stock
- Greasy stock
- Unstrained stock
- Imperfect coagulation of the clearing agents
- Soup not settling before straining
- Lack cleanliness of pan or muslin cloth (traces of grease/starch)
- Speed of boiling (too slow = raft sinks to bottom; too fast = break raft)
- Whisking after boiling point is reached, whereby the impurities mix with the liquid

GARNISHES

Consommés are varied in many ways by altering the stock, e.g. chicken, chicken and beef, etc. and also by the addition of numerous garnishes. Certain consommés are also served cold and are popular in very hot weather for luncheon, dinner or supper. Consommé garnishes are added just before serving, so that it does not cloud the soup. All cut garnishes must fit within the well of a soupspoon.

CONSOMME ROYALE

A royal is a savoury egg custard used for garnishing a consommé, it should be firm but tender, and the texture is smooth, not porous. When cut, no moisture (syneresis) should be apparent; when this happens it is a sign of overcooking.

CONSOMME JULIENNE

Consommé garnished with julienne of carrot, leek, turnip, celery and cabbage plus chiffonade of sorrel and chervil

CONSOMME BRUNOISE

Basic consommé with a garnish of diced vegetables, cook as for julienne. Added to the consommé at the last minute before serving.

CONSOMME CELESTINE

A basic consommé garnished with fine julienne of pancake. The pancakes are made from a basic pancake mixture, seasoned with salt and pepper and chopped parsley, tarragon and chervil are usually added. Added to the consommé at the last moment before serving.

CONSOMME VERMICELLI

Vermicelli is cooked in boiling salted water until tender and refresh under cold running water. It is drained in a strainer and added to the consommé at the last moment before serving.

CONSOMME PROFITEROLES

Use choux paste to pipe out pea-sized pieces on a lightly greased baking sheet and bake until golden brown. Added to the consommé at the last moment or served separately (do not add sugar to the choux paste).

PETITE MARMITE

This is a double-strength consommé garnished with neat pieces of chicken winglet, cubed beef, turned carrots and turnips and squares of celery, leek and cabbage. The traditional method of preparation is for the marmites to be cooked in special earthenware or porcelain pots. Petit marmite should be accompanied by thin toasted slices of fluke, sole turbot, grated Parmesan cheese and a slice or two of poached beef marrow.
HOW AND WHY ON PREPARING A CONSOMMÉ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blend together the meat, mirepoix vegetables, herbs, spices and egg white</td>
<td>These ingredients together will form the clarification raft. Ingredients should be processed finely so that they release their flavour quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a heavy bottom pot</td>
<td>This helps to prevent clarification ingredients from sticking and scorching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stir into the cold stock, making sure the raft ingredients is well dispersed</td>
<td>Cold stock will ensure that all the impurities come together and rise to the surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring to a slow simmer, stirring frequently until the raft begins to form</td>
<td>Stir to keep the raft ingredients from sticking to the bottom of the pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a spoon to gently create a opening in the forming raft</td>
<td>This hole will create a space through which to taste and see. It also release pressure which keeps the raft from breaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmer without stirring once the raft is formed</td>
<td>Simmer should be strong enough to carry impurities to the top, but gentle enough not to break the raft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmer for about 25 minutes</td>
<td>Enough time must be allowed for development of flavour, colour and body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strain through a clean muslin cloth</td>
<td>Greasy or dirty muslin cloth will make the consommé cloudy and/or greasy. Straining removes small particles that might make the consommé cloudy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t pour the consommé and raft into a strainer</td>
<td>This will cause the raft to break up and release impurities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES