

C H R I S T M A S 2 0 1 7

Flavour.ie Christmas Food

Your FREE recipe booklet for this festive season!

Christmas!

It needn't be as stressful as everyone makes out! I LOVE this time of year and yes, although it is difficult to try and squeeze everything in, it just wouldn't be the same without the buzz of everyone rushing to the post office to send off parcels to loved ones abroad; ordering turkey and ham from the local butchers shop, heading out with the family to choose your Christmas Tree and of course the "Merry Christmas" on everyone's lips!

Whether you are the chief cook on Christmas Day or just hosting a pre or post Christmas get-together, the food preparation side should not be hectic for you. A few simple things that celebrate seasonality, support local food producers and delivers on bags of flavour is all you need!



This year, I'm focusing on Slurps and Sips!

I'm sure the last thing you need from me is another eBook packed full of Christmas recipes? And if that is what you need, then seek out my 2015 and 2016 eBooks on The Flavour Files Blog!

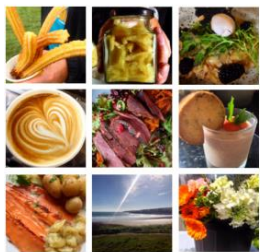
Instead, this year I have decided to focus on Seasonal Soups for Slurping at any time over winter (let alone Christmas) and Warming Cocktails to welcome your guests into your home!

Keeping it simple this year so you can have a Merry Christmas and...Enjoy!

Inside...

Seasonal Soups for
Slurping!

Warming Cocktails!



Seasonal Soups for Slurping!

Many of you will know of my love for a hearty bowl of soup. There is simply nothing easier to make that is packed full of essential veggies for the long dark winter, healthy, low in fat but still packed with flavor. Soups is a great way for using up leftover veggies too; endlessly versatile, thrifty and capable of feeding the multitudes alongside hunks of sourdough bread lashed with real butter!

All of these recipes are based on serving 4-6 people, but can be easily scaled up to feed many more!

Any excess can be portioned off and frozen.

Sweet Potato & Coconut

Ingredients:

- 1 large sweet potato
- 1 white onion, finely diced
- 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- Thumb-sized piece of ginger, grated
- 1 Thai birdseye chili (deseed if prefer to moderate heat)
- 250ml of full fat coconut milk
- 500ml of vegetable stock
- Zest and juice of half a lime, segments for garnish
- Fresh coriander for garnish.
- Sea salt to taste.

Method:

- Peel and chop the sweet potato into 1 inch chunks. Steam until soft and tender.
- In a saucepan, slowly sweat the onion, garlic, ginger and chili in some vegetable oil and butter until the onions are translucent and careful not to colour anything in the pan.
- Add the steamed potatoes to the onion mix and coat in mix.
- Add in the coconut milk and simmer for a couple of minutes to allow the flavours to mingle.
- Add in half the stock and begin to blend adding a little more of the stock each time until everything has come together. You may not use all the stock at this stage.
- Return everything to the pan and warm through until bubbling. At this point, check the consistency of the soup and if a little too thick add the remaining stock until you are happy!
- Add in the lime zest and juice, check for seasoning and adjust to your taste.
- Ladle into warmed bowls and garnish with a swirl of coconut milk, a segment of lime and some fresh coriander leaves.



Squash Chestnut & Sage

Ingredients:

- 1 Butternut Squash, peeled, deseeded and cut into 1 inch chunks
- 6 Chestnuts (fresh or vacuum packed)
- 1 white onion, finely diced
- 1 clove of garlic, finely chopped or grated
- Fresh sage, small handful
- 1 litre of vegetable stock
- Vegetable oil and butter
- Fresh cream
- Sea salt to taste.



Method:

- Steam the prepared squash until tender. Set aside.
- If you are using fresh chestnuts, prepare them then either boil or roast until tender, peel and set aside.
- If using vacuum packed chestnuts, pull the amount needed from the pack and set aside.
- Meanwhile slowly sweat the onion and garlic in a pan with a drop of oil and a knob of butter until the onion is translucent and starting to take on some colour, but be careful not to burn the garlic.
- Add in the butternut squash and the chopped sage, setting aside a little of the sage for garnish.
- Crumble in the chestnuts and mix everything together.
- Add half the stock or enough to be able to blend everything together. Add stock until everything has come together well. You may not use all the stock at this stage.
- Transfer everything back into a saucepan and reheat through. Check the consistency of the soup and if too thick, add the remaining stock until you are happy.
- Check for seasoning and adjust with sea salt and some freshly ground black pepper to taste.
- Ladle into warmed bowls and serve with a drizzle of fresh cream and a garnish of sage.



Carrot, Ginger and Coriander Soup

Ingredients

- 3 large organic carrots, peeled and cut into 3cm chunks
- 1 white onion, finely diced
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 3 inch piece of organic ginger, grated – skin and all
- ½ tbsp of coriander seeds, toasted and ground
- 1 tsp of ground cumin
- Handful of fresh coriander
- 1 ltr of vegetable stock
- Vegetable oil and butter
- Sea salt and black pepper
- Natural yoghurt to garnish



Method

- Steam the carrots until tender. Reserve the steaming liquid and make up the vegetable stock with it. Add boiling water to make up the required amount.
- Sweat the onion until translucent but does not take on any colour. Add the garlic, sweat again and finally the ginger.
- Add in the toasted and ground coriander seeds and the cumin powder. Add the steamed carrots and most of the fresh coriander leaf and stir to combine.
- Add enough vegetable stock to begin blending the soup. Add more until everything has come together and smoothly blended. You may not use all the stock at this stage.
- Transfer everything back into the pan and gently reheat. Add more stock until you are happy with the consistency.
- Season to taste with sea salt and plenty of freshly ground black pepper.
- Ladle into warmed bowls and garnish with some natural yogurt and some fresh coriander leaves.



Beetroot, Fennel & Chili Soup

Ingredients

- 3-4 good sized beetroot (about the size of your hand, if they are small you will need more)
- 2 cloves of garlic, smashed in their skins
- 1/2 red chilli
- 2tsp of fennel seeds
- Rapeseed oil
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 500ml vegetable stock



Method

- Heat the oven to 180 degs Celsius
- Peel the beetroot and chop into medium sized chunks (halved, halved and halved again should be perfect)
- Place onto a lined baking tray and add the chopped red chilli, fennel seed, garlic, rapeseed oil, salt and pepper.
- Toss everything together to ensure it is well coated and place in the oven until the beetroot is cooked through.
- Give the beetroot mix a stir about half way through the total cooking time which will be about an hour.
- Blend everything with 400ml of vegetable stock.
- Blitz, then check for texture. If slightly too thick, add the remaining 100ml of stock.
- Check for seasoning, adjust if necessary and blitz again to combine.



Cream of Chicken Soup



Ingredients

NOTE: You can substitute chicken for turkey here of course! 1 whole turkey carcass to 4 chicken carcass should be more than enough!

- 4 chicken carcasses, stripped of all meat (keep the meat though!) and roasted until deep golden brown.
- 1.5 ltrs of chicken stock made from 500mls of homemade stock base
- 2 white onions, finely diced
- 4 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- Thumb sized piece of organic ginger, grated with skin on
- 1 large carrot, peeled and chopped into 2cm pieces
- Generous amount of fresh parsley and thyme
- Sea salt and black pepper
- 150ml of cream.

Method:

- Firstly roast off the chicken carcass so as to get maximum flavour for your stock.
- When ready, add the carcasses to a large pot and add in enough water to completely cover the carcass. Simmer covered for about 30 minutes, then uncover, turn down the heat the medium and cook until reduced to apx 1 litre of intense chicken stock. Do not season!
- Strain the liquid, discard the carcasses and set aside. As it cools, it will thicken to a jelly like consistency.
- In a pan with a little olive oil and butter, add the onions, garlic and ginger and gently sweat down.
- Add the carrots and about half the amount of the fresh herbs.
- Make up your stock using 500mls of the homemade chicken stock base and topping it up to 1.5 ltrs using freshly boiled water. Mix through and add at least 1 litre to the soup base. Reserve the rest for finishing or add to the soup as it is cooking.
- Cook on a low simmer until all the carrots are almost tender.
- Add in the reserved chicken meat and cook until it is thoroughly heated through.
- Blend the soup until it is smooth. You may need to add a little more stock here to aid the blending process!
- Return to the pan and add the cream, and the remaining stock (if you think it is needed) until you have the perfect consistency.
- Add in the last of the freshly chopped herbs, and taste for seasoning adding sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Remember that there was no salt in the stock so you may need a good amount here in the finishing of the soup to get it just right!
- Ladle into warmed bowls and serve with a sprinkling of fresh herbs to finish.



Celery and Blue Cheese Soup

Ingredients:

- Olive oil
- 1/2 small or 1/4 large celeriac bulb, peeled and cut into 1cm dice
- 1 white onion, finely diced
- 4 sticks of celery washed, trimmed and finely sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1tsp whole coriander seed
- 1tsp whole fennel seed
- 600ml vegetable stock
- 25g blue cheese, chopped (no rind)
- 1 1/2 tsp of smoked paprika
- Celery leaves
- Chili oil, sea salt and freshly ground black pepper



Method:

- Heat 1 tbsp. of olive oil into a heavy deep saucepan.
- Add the onion, celery and bay leaves. Stir then cover with the lid and turn down to a low heat to sweat (try not to colour the onion).
- Toast the coriander and fennel seeds until they start to release their aroma and then crush in a pestle and mortar into a fine powder.
- Add the diced celeriac and crushed seeds to the onion mix and stir so well covered; cook uncovered for a couple of minutes and then add the hot stock.
- Allow to cook through until the celeriac is thoroughly softened but not mushy.
- Add everything to a blender and add the blue cheese, paprika and pepper and blitz until smooth. Check for consistency and seasoning. If too thick add some hot water a little at a time as you blitz to get the right consistency for you. Taste and see if you need to add some sea salt at this stage. Blitz again and keep tasting until you feel the balance of seasoning is just right for you.
- Serve into warmed bowls and garnish with a sprinkle of paprika, a couple of fresh celery leaves and a tiny drizzle of chili oil.



Ultimate Potato & Leek Soup

Ingredients:

- Knob of butter
- 1tsp of olive oil
- 50g smoked bacon lardons (I use Gubbeen here, but Baltimore Pig is also good)
- 3 small or 1 large leek cleaned, trimmed and sliced into thin rounds
- 250g potatoes, peeled and cut into apx 3cm cubed pieces
- 500ml of vegetable stock (if using a cube/gel only use half in 500ml of water)
- 250ml hot water
- 25g flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste.



Method:

- Over a medium heat, slowly heat the oil and butter together.
- Add the bacon lardon and fry gently until starting to colour but not too dark (this will ruin the final colour of the soup)
- Add the leeks, stir through and cook until softened.
- Add the chopped potatoes. Stir and cover with the bacon and leek mix. Cook for a minute or two, then add the stock.
- Cover, turn down the heat and cook until the potatoes are softened and cooked through but not falling apart. Add a little more of the hot water if needed.
- Add everything to a blender, blend until smooth. If too thick add the remaining hot water a little at a time until the required consistency is gained.
- Return to the pan and heat through. At this stage taste and season with salt and pepper to taste. You can also add more water to thin out further especially if you are turning the soup into the base of your chowder.
- Spoon into bowls and garnish with a drizzle of cream, some fried crispy lardons, a couple of fried potato slices and a leaf of parsley. Finish with a final grind of black pepper and serve up immediately with some crusty bread and butter.



Warming Cocktails!

5 gorgeous warming cocktails that are as equally good to keep to yourself as for sharing! Great to have on the go this festive season to surprise and delight your visitors and guests!

Mulled Plum Wine



A twist on the classic sees a focus on sweet rather than bitter fruits.

Don't be stingy with the wine – a cheap wine will not mull well, but at the same time you don't need to raid the family cellar!

Ingredients (serves 12-24 depending on the size of the glass)

- 2 x 75cl bottles of full bodied red wine (think punchy Rioja's, lavish Argentinian Mendoza's or robust Bordeaux)
- 1 orange studded with 10 cloves
- 1 large Seville or Blood Orange sliced
- 6 juicy and ripe purple plums
- 4 tsp of local honey
- 1 stick of Sri Lankan Cinnamon
- Thumb sized piece of peeled root ginger sliced into rounds
- 2 tbsp of Cointreau

Method:

- About an hour or two before you are planning to serve the mulled wine, combine all the ingredients except for the Cointreau into a heavy bottom pan and very gently heat up over the lowest possible setting.
- Be careful not to boil. Set aside and take out the orange slices and about half of the ginger.
- When ready to serve, place the mixture over a low heat again as before and this time add the Cointreau.
- Ladle the mulled wine (less any bits) into pretty crystal glasses, garnish with a slice of ripe plum and serve immediately.



Mulled Cider



Mulled Cider is something I remember drinking a lot around Guy Fawkes night back home in South West England. The good thing about this recipe is it works equally well with good quality cloudy apple juice and minus the rum for the little ones and any designated drivers.

Ingredients (serves about 6 services depending on size of the glass)

- 1 litre of excellent quality dry cider (must be dry cider not sweet)
- 2 tbsp of brown sugar
- 4 cloves
- 2 star anise
- 2 Sri Lankan cinnamon sticks
- 6 tbsp dark Navy rum
- Granny Smith apples, peeled and cut into spheres using a melon baller

Method:

- Place all the ingredients into a heavy bottom pan over heat gently until all the sugars have dissolved, ensuring the mixture does not boil.
- Serve in mini Stein glasses and garnish with two apple balls speared with a cocktail stick.



Mulled Whisky Sour

This is a firm favourite in our house – we love a well-made Old Fashioned and with the array of Irish craft Whisky now available across the county we can indulge even more. This is definitely one for adults only – sorry kids! By the way, the glacé cherries are an absolute must here.

Ingredients (makes 6 servings):

- 400ml West Cork Distillers Bourbon Cask Whiskey
- 200ml sieved fresh lemon juice
- 100ml runny honey
- 2 cinnamon stick (plus 1 for each glass as garnish)
- 2 maraschino cherries per glass
- 1/2 slice of lemon per glass

Method:

- Put the whiskey, lemon juice, honey and 1 cinnamon stick into a pan and very slowly warm it through.
- Be very careful not to boil it, but this should take about 5-10 mins.
- Carefully pour out equally between heavy crystal tumblers.
- Spear the half-moon slice of lemon and two cherries on a cocktail stick and place in the glass. Ensure that the cherries are submerged in the whiskey. Add a cinnamon stick for stirring and serve.





Mulled Port

I am a huge fan on Hot Port in the winter time, my local pub landlady makes a particularly good one, and is a nice antidote to the harshness of Hot Whisky. But when you mull the Port with a few simple and complimentary flavours it suddenly becomes a thing of intense pleasure – completely and unapologetically!

Ingredients (this is per person but scales up well)

- 70ml of Ruby Port
- 25ml of Longueville House Brandy
- 100ml cranberry juice
- 1 tbsp of good quality Maple syrup
- 1 star anise
- Sweet orange for zesting and garnish.



Method:

- Place the port, brandy, star anise and a small amount of orange zest into a heavy bottom pan and heat very gently ensuring it does not boil.
- Just before it looks as though it would boil, add in the cranberry juice and maple syrup. Warm through gently again.
- Pour into a brandy glass, rub a slice of fresh orange around the rim and garnish the glass.



Aged Egg Nog



Every Christmas, we start celebrations off with a Snowball made from Advocaat, an egg based liquor. It is wonderful, but is fairly tame on the alcohol front, so for a bit of added POW go the extra distance and make Egg Nog instead. Make the basic mix a few days before and it will age in the fridge – completely safely as the eggs are preserved by the copious amounts of rum. Plus it thickens and get creamier as it ages, meaning all you have to do on the day is whip the egg whites, decant and finish with fresh nutmeg!

As this is a traditional American drink, I am using American measures in US Cups.

Ingredients (makes 6 large servings, or more if served in a small glass – advisable if you are aging your Egg Nog!)

- 6 large eggs – yolk and white separated;
- 1 cup of white sugar
- 2 cups of whole milk
- 1 cup of thick cream
- 1 ½ cups of dark Spiced Rum (e.g. Bacardi Oakheart)
- Whole nutmeg

Method:

- Whisk the sugar and egg yolks together until creamy and colour has turned light yellow.
- Add the milk, cream and rum and mix to combine.
- If aging, decant into an airtight container and place in the fridge from 1 – 4 days.
- When ready to serve, whip up the egg whites into stiff peaks.
- Fold the whipped egg whites into the aged or fresh egg nog and garnish with a grating of fresh nutmeg and festive straw.



That's your Christmas Slurps and Sips sorted!

Hope you enjoy making these recipes and treat yourself to a Christmas full of FLAVOUR and minimal stress! Have fun this festive season and Flavour.ie will be back with more tasty recipes, events, news and reviews in 2018!



Merry Christmas
From all at
Flavour.ie