

CHICKEN SOUP

This is the first food my son ate that didn't come from a breast or a jar. When he took his first bite, his eyes got big and round. It's been a favorite of his ever since. Mine is a basic soup, but it has a lot of soul and is the best thing you can eat when you have a cold.

BROTH:

1 3 ½ to 4 pound chicken, plus 2 legs and thighs

1 carrot

1 celery stalk

1 yellow onion

Optional: 1 bulb of garlic, cut in half crosswise

12 peppercorns

½ teaspoon salt

SOUP:

3 medium carrots, peeled and chopped

2 stalks celery, chopped

1 medium yellow onion, peeled and chopped

(you should have roughly equal amounts of celery, carrots, and onion)

4 tablespoons butter (1/2 stick)

¾ cup white rice (like Uncle Ben's converted) or alphabet noodles

1 10 ounce bag frozen peas

Salt and pepper to taste

BROTH:

Rinse chicken inside and out under cold running water. Remove any excess fat from the cavity. Remove the entire breast from the whole chicken, and place all chicken parts, legs and thighs first and breast on top, in a stockpot that is large enough to hold the chicken leaving no more than ½ an inch to an inch around the sides. Fill the pot with cold water until the top of the breast is barely out of the water. Add carrot, celery, onion, garlic (if using), salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, cover with the lid slightly ajar, and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes, remove the breast and set aside, cover the pot with the lid slightly ajar and continue simmering for 60-90 minutes. When the breast is cool enough to handle, remove the skin, and pull the meat off the bones and keep refrigerated until you're ready to assemble the soup. Reserve the white meat for the soup, and the dark for another use. Chop or shred the white meat. Discard vegetables, strain broth into another container, and allow it to cool, before refrigerating. When the fat has risen to the top of the broth, remove it. Place broth in a large saucepan and return it to a boil.

SOUP:

Melt butter in a heavy large dutch oven over medium-high heat, and cook carrots, onion and celery until soft. Add a few grinds of freshly ground pepper and a dash of salt, before adding the broth. When broth returns to a boil, add rice or noodles. Cover and simmer over low heat for 20 minutes. Add chicken and peas, and return to medium heat for 5 minutes or until peas are tender and chicken is heated through. Taste, adjust seasonings and serve. We always set half aside to freeze in 2 cup containers.