

Mom's Chicken Soup

By: Susan Damiao

"Come inside, it's time to eat," my Mother would call. "Auuugh!! Soup again," I would groan. Portuguese Chicken Soup was a classic meal in our home.

Little did I know that once I became an adult and moved from home, I would crave that soup almost immediately. When I visited my parents, I'd hope that my mother had a pot of her famous soup sitting on the stove.

Now it's my turn to hear my daughter cry the only too familiar cry: "Auuugh!! Soup again!" I find it amusing to hear the same whines passing down to the next generation. My husband and son enjoy the soup. Other adult family members seem to really enjoy this soup, but I find that the children may differ in their tastes. For instance, my daughter and my nephew have totally different reactions. One is terrified of the thought of eating the soup and the other obviously can't get enough of it. What a treat to watch. It makes me so pleased to see them enjoy it and I can only giggle when they don't. Either way, somehow I am passing along Mother's love and warmth that I felt she put into every pot.



I like serving this soup to my family because I believe it meets their nutritional needs and it's comfort food. My brother-in-law believes that soup does not make a meal in itself, but I beg to differ, especially with this soup. A good hearty soup poured over a bed of rice with a side order of oven fresh bread and cut up fruit and veggies for the taking – Who could argue?

My mother used a whole chicken or parts of a chicken, skin and all, while I use either skinless chicken legs with thighs attached or just chicken breasts (depending what's on hand).

- 4 Chicken Legs – thighs attached (skinless chicken)
- 5 cups Chicken Stock (low sodium) or water – I just go with what's on hand. Add more or less water; depending how you like your soup. I personally like it on the brothy side.
- 1 medium onion - diced
- 2 stalks celery - sliced
- 1 red pepper - chopped
- 1 green pepper - chopped
- 3 medium carrots - sliced
- 4 cups collards – cut in strips (or as we called them in Portuguese "Couves")
- ½ bunch fresh parsley
- 3 tbsp. vegetable oil (I like to use Extra Virgin Olive Oil)
- few shakes or grinds of black pepper (approx. 1 tsp)
- pinch of sea salt

In a large pot sauté both onions and celery until slightly browned; add black pepper. Add water and bring to a boil. Add thoroughly washed chicken to boiling water. Let boil until $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way cooked. Skim the fat that rises. Add vegetables and salt and let cook over low heat for 1 hour. Once again, skim the remaining fat that rises. Remove chicken from soup and let cool before removing meat from bone. Cut up the meat into bite-sized pieces and return to pot.

Suggestion: Serve soup over your favourite pasta or rice.

There are so many alternatives to this recipe because you use what's on hand. For example, brussel sprouts are a great addition to the soup. You can either omit the collards when adding brussel sprouts or just reduce the amount of each.

My mother slow cooked the soup and skimmed the fat off the soup; I don't believe she ever added chicken broth. If I don't have broth on hand, I use water.

You can alter the recipe by omitting the chicken and adding authentic Portuguese sausage as well as replacing the chicken broth with water – it's very yummy.

I would describe this soup as bringing together the feelings of warmth, comfort, and family ties. I hope, in the distant future, that my children will continue to make this soup as a classic meal for their families.

