

Is There A Doctor in the House?

O.K. Maybe I'm just a weeeee bit paranoid. I believe that right now is a great time to prepare ourselves for an increased risk of flu. Many experts think February is when we'll start to see it in the schools and workplaces and more and more people are telling me they've come in contact with it.

As you might imagine much of my preparedness has to do with food and my greatest weapon in the cold/flu arsenal is a family recipe I received in Florida for true Matzo Ball Soup. The delightful lady who shared this bit of family treasure with us was "Bubbe" Arlene Hoffman who was raised in an orthodox Jewish family...this is the real thing, believe me!

And if you're not sure that this recipe will work for your family, I made buckets of it for our restaurant in Blanchester. It was made in 3 gallon batches and I don't recall there ever being leftovers if you get my drift.

It has been called "Jewish Penicillin" for as long as I've known about it and it works. There's some magical ingredient in it that breaks up congestion, eases aches and pains and makes you feel human at times you have given up on that ever happening again. I read somewhere that there's something in the chicken stock; that may be the case. (I'm pretty sure it has a lot more to do with the love you put into this soup as you prepare it. Remember...love conquers all!)

Bubbe's Chicken Matzo Ball Soup

The Stock – I know I'll get arguments but there's no replacement for real homemade chicken stock which can't be made quickly. Put a big, fat roasting hen in a heavy bottomed soup pot, add water until it is covered and bring the water to boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook the chicken for two hours or longer. Add water if needed during this process to keep the chicken covered. You'll know when the hen is done by the way the meat is falling off the bones when tested with a fork. Remove the pot from the heat and allow it to cool.

Roll up your sleeves! Once the stock is cool you'll need to remove all bones, cartilage and skin from the chicken by hand. The meat that remains should be torn into smaller pieces and returned to the stock. Add enough water to bring your broth volume to 6 quarts and bring temperature back up to slow simmer.

Add to broth:

2 cups diced carrots
2 cups diced celery w/leaves
½ teaspoon fresh ground black pepper

Cook until carrots and celery are tender.

When you've placed your chicken in water to make stock it's time to make Matzo Balls.

If you've ever enjoyed a traditional Passover celebration you know what Matzo is. The joke is that it's so bland that many great recipes have been created just to make the stuff edible. If you're not familiar with it, picture a thin cracker type sheet that can be crumbled up to the consistency of meal. We will be using Matzo meal to make our *kneidlach* (dumplings). Our favorite brand of Matzo Meal is made by Streit.

To start, thoroughly mix:

6 eggs (room temperature)
1 teaspoon sea salt
4 teaspoons dried chives
½ cup soda water
3 tablespoons vegetable oil

After blended, gradually stir in:

2 cups matzo meal
2 teaspoons dried parsley

Place matzo mix in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour and up to 4. When you're ready to finish your soup, bring your stock back up to a rolling boil and form your matzo ball mix with wet hands into small balls the size of acorns. Drop the balls into the boiling stock. As you begin to fill the pot with Matzo Balls you will probably need someone to assist you with a spoon to open up space to drop the last of your dumplings in. Once they're all in there, reduce the heat to simmer and cook the dumplings for about 20 minutes.

Your Matzo Balls will puff up to more than double their original size and come out reasonably fluffy. (If they're too firm you have over stirred them during the mixing process...keep that in mind as you're making the mix.)

The soup is wonderful and can be reheated the next day. Do so gently and gradually to avoid destroying the Matzo Balls which can break apart when reheated if the soup is brought back up to a vigorous boil. I hope you will enjoy this favorite of my family and remember; it is also quite good when served to healthy diners!

And from the wine cellar...

If you enjoy pork dishes of all types a great wine combination is available from both California and Germany to compliment the meal, depending on your taste preferences.

The 2003 Definitive Carneros Pinot Noir is proof that there are great domestic Pinot Noirs in the US that can compete with the top Pinot Noirs of Burgundy. It is decidedly feminine in style with hints of wild strawberries and sour cherries. The feminine tag describes this wine as round and somewhat voluptuous in texture, soft but very powerful.

From the German area of our cellar, we found the 2003 Burg Layer Schlosskapelle Bacchus Kabinett to be an absolute treat with pork, especially with those preparation styles that emphasize a sweeter style seasoning such as BBQ. The Bacchus grape gives us a wild flower bouquet along with ripe apples and honey. With the German quality level, Kabinett, the wine is just fruity enough to make it desirable for wine lovers who appreciate dry wines as well as fruity ones.

Also, I'd like to share with you a delightful cheese I've just been introduced to by our foody buddy, Chuck, during a great meal he prepared for us this past weekend. You'll probably have to make a trip to Jungle Jim's to purchase Shropshire Cheddar but it would be well worth it. This is a full bodied English cheddar cheese with veins of blue cheese. It is devastating and powerful if you enjoy assertive cheeses and is dynamite with a rich, buttery Chardonnay. Taste it if you get a chance!

Call us at 888-288-0668 if we can be of assistance!