

## **Spring Break Eats**

It's Wednesday and by now if you have children they're reminding you why school in session is a really good thing! You'll know exactly what I mean when you call a friend to arrange a play date at their house and they laugh hysterically as they hang up on you. This is not a time for fancy heroics in the kitchen. You'll need food the kids like and lots of it.

Now your kids will try to convince you that boxed cereal works well for both breakfast and lunch or a carton of Ho Ho's and a gallon of milk would really hit the spot. Don't buy into it! You might as well hand a can of gas to a freaky looking dude named Sparky.

The key is slow burn carbohydrates such as pasta or potatoes. If you let them fend for themselves they're going to hit the sugar and it won't be pretty, I promise you.

A big batch of soup has lots of advantages and I've got a couple recipes that were big hits at our restaurant. The first one came to me from our great friend, Kim, who feeds a husband and seven children with it. This is one of their favorites.

### **Smoky Corn Chowder**

(double batch – feeds a small army)

1 large can cream corn  
¾ cup of Martha White Potato Flakes  
¾ cup chopped sweet onions  
1 ½ sticks unsalted butter  
½ cup all purpose flour  
12 cups whole milk  
2-12oz packs of Smoky Links, sliced up  
2-8oz cans of baby lima beans  
2- 16oz cans of whole sweet corn, drained  
1 ½ teaspoons dill weed  
2 tablespoons dried parsley or ½ cup fresh chopped parsley

Use a heavy bottom large soup pot, heat butter at medium high heat and add onions. Sauté onions until tender and slowly blend flour into the butter and onions. Add milk and remaining ingredients except for potato flakes.

Bring all just to a simmer stirring frequently. Simmer for about 10 minutes then stir in potato flakes. Continue to stir and simmer for about 5 more minutes and allow soup to thicken as the potato flakes do their stuff.

This soup is great served with grilled cheese sandwiches or Texas toast. (If you need to reduce this recipe it's a simple one to cut to half for a smaller army.)

The next soup is one that can be very spicy if your children appreciate a bit of heat. If not, I have also listed the ways to adjust it for the “not so daring” diners.

## **Spicy Beefy Mac N’ Cheese Soup**

(Serves 6 to 8)

12 oz macaroni, cooked and drained  
½ gallon whole milk  
2 cans Campbell’s Cheddar Cheese Soup  
1 lb. ground round, browned and drained  
½ brick Velveeta brand processed cheese, cut to small cubes  
1 small 10 oz. can Rotel Original Diced Tomatoes & Chilies (Use ½ can for the timid!)  
Sea Salt & fresh ground pepper, to taste  
Tabasco, served on side

Use a heavy bottom soup pot, heat your milk just shy of boiling and add your Velveeta in small cubes, stir frequently until cheese is melted into milk. You may adjust the thickness of your base by adding more cheese if you like. Add in Campbell’s Cheddar Cheese soup concentrate only, no additional milk. Stir until smooth.

Add your beef, macaroni and Rotel and keep your temperature just below a simmer. Continue to heat for 10 minutes. Taste and season with sea salt & pepper.

When serving garnish with a sprinkle of shredded cheddar cheese. The soup is great with garlicky bread sticks.

Just a note for some who may poo poo the Velveeta cheese we are using to create our base. It is used “a lot” in some really great restaurants and offers the advantage that it does not “break” in your soup like many other cheeses have a tendency of doing. This occurs when you accidentally bring your heat up too high, usually during reheating of soup and it will appear to curdle. Velveeta melts really well and provides rich cheese flavors that most kids enjoy!

Our weekly wine suggestion is perfect now that the weather is improving for those intimate conversations out on the porch after dinner. My wife and I make it a point to take 20 or 30 minutes for ourselves to talk without children around. A great accompaniment for that is a well made late harvest Riesling from Germany call Auslese.

The 2002 Schloss Zell Riesling Auslese has a firm concentration of super ripe Granny Smith apples in the flavor beautifully balanced by fresh fruit acidity similar to citrus character. I don’t care if you’ve never found a wine you could appreciate, this one will hit the mark.

Schloss Zell is a castle located in the Mosel River region of southwest Germany with vineyards that hug the steep hills overlooking the serpentine winding river below. There are high concentrations of slate and shale in the soil, which helps with drainage and

actually imparts a sharper style to the Riesling grape, a characteristic the Germans describe as “steely.”

The Auslese is made from grapes picked near the very end of the growing season, sometimes as late as the end of November. These are the ripest, most succulent grapes that are normally picked by hand and placed into a special batch to be gently pressed and slowly fermented in cooled tanks. The result is a super rich style packed full of exotic fruit flavors but never cloyingly sweet.

I hope you’ll try a good Auslese and we’d love to hear from you as to what you think!  
Call us anytime at 888-288-0668. Cheers!