

Howard, Now that you have your own clandestine kitchen, you may find some special interest in the attached "Cream of Heirloom Soup" article from today's post. It reminds me of part of my past experiences that you may find adaptable if you have no concern about tell-tale aromas. These can attract official noses as they can entice guests not invited or wanted. There is something to be said for soup that is less than heirloom in vintage and much to be said for vintage soup.

At the time I was fighting Dies I had no income. I shared my small but adequate two-room-kitchenette quarters near the Capitol, in what was then a black ghetto, with a friend who had a fixed income of \$15.00 a week, often more than mine. He was a French-Canadian in origin, had as a very young man written a successful book (from experience) about lumberjacking (Timber) got an advance for the second, and stopped writing to become an activist. He was then Washington rep. of the International Labor Defense and had very much to do before that with the Scottsboro Case. From his slight accent he got the nickname "Limey" before I met him. He was used to adversity and came from a culture in which it was the norm. He was older than I.

Limey was an expert in soups, the cheapest way to eat. We had one going all the time. You can't duplicate what we did, as I can't today, but maybe you can approximate it. Unless you have an inexpensive cost of low heat or no cost in heat at all, you'll require refrigeration. We used the pilot light on the gas stove, keeping a pot on it constantly.

We threw nothing away except possibly eggshells. Everything went into that soup, especially the water in which vegetables were cooked. All leftovers. I was always looking for bones and when I couldn't get them free bought shankbones, which often had meat and could be bought with all the muscle very inexpensively. Tails were not available in the city then.

The secret was to keep the soup simmering all the time. This kept it from going bad. If this can't be done, I suppose refrigeration is a substitute. As I remember it, we cleaned it up about weekly and started a new one. No straining and egg-wasting as this piece says is the old French way.

In looking back on this, I can conceive two ways in which we could have improved on the method. One would have been a pressure-cooker, perhaps. The other, more likely, would be a waterless cooker. One of the easier ways to get one today would be to use a baby's bottle sterilizer. These have an odd shape, but that is no real disadvantage. They conserve heat and make more efficient use of it. Both makes noises, the sterilizer a slight clicking sound as the pressure builds up and the steam, escaping through a simple flat valve, raises it and then lets it fall.

I don't think we ever evolved a delicate soup. All I can recall were robust, thick in consistency and strong in flavor. They are quite nourishing, too. Of course, they lend themselves to improvisation. In content and in seasoning. There is virtually nothing that can be used to advantage and often what is used contains much of the food value that would otherwise be discarded, like vegetable water. If you eat out, for example, a plastic doggie-bag in the pocket for left-overs, might provide some ingredients.

Bill and I carried this on after Limey left town. Often I think of trying to rig a hanger on the fireplace for on an old cast-iron pot I have so that we might do the same, but we eat so little and can afford so little that provides such left-overs I haven't done anything about it besides latch onto the iron I'd need to make it. The only bones we ever have are from chickens or turkeys. Beef is out of sight for us, as you may have noticed. However, if I ever see an old-fashioned hotplate with a small enough low setting and the right shape, where the pot can rest squarely on it, I might make the effort again for cold weather, for we do have a waterless cooker and several pressure-cookers. The only hotplates I have are real coffee pot trivets and of the wrong shape. However, if you want one, I can also supply a pot made to fit it, of small capacity, perhaps a quart. These are from the days when we had Cory vacuum coffee-makers. HW 2/4/75