

Soup Up Your Menu

Whether you're stuck inside for health or weather reasons or just need some comfort food, these are good times for soup. You'll find a bunch of ideas here that are a bargain and easy to make. Soups offer easy, tasty ways to [stretch a meal budget](#). Anything edible can be transformed into soup by simply boiling it in water, broth, or stock, so making soup is an excellent way to use leftovers and avoid food waste. These easy-to-make versions of popular recipes use canned stock and other convenient ingredients, but replacing them with [homemade versions](#) can save even more money.



Pasta e Fagioli

The name of this Italian favorite, which also goes by the slang name "pasta fazool," literally translates to "pasta and beans." Drain two 15-ounce cans of cannellini or borlotti beans, setting the bean juice aside for later use. In a large pot, combine the drained beans with one 14-ounce can of beef or chicken broth. Stir in either two crushed garlic cloves or a quarter teaspoon of garlic powder; 3 ounces (half a can) of tomato paste; and a tablespoon each of dried parsley, dried basil, and dried thyme. Add 4 ounces of dried elbow macaroni or seashell pasta plus 8 ounces of bean juice or water (2 ounces of liquid for every ounce of pasta). Boil for seven to 10 minutes, stirring frequently, until the pasta is soft. When serving, top off each bowl with a sprinkling of freshly ground black pepper and grated Parmesan or Romano cheese.



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Georgian Beef Soup

This hearty soup is made by slow simmering beef and adding plenty of herbs. A tomato-chili mixture adds depth and warming spice to help ward off the chill of cold winter days. The one specialty ingredient is *tkemali*, a sour plum sauce that can be found for a few dollars per bottle at specialty shops or online, or substituted with tamarind paste. **Recipe:** [Food.com](https://www.food.com/recipe/kharcho-georgian-beef-walnut-soup-with-fresh-herbs-16800) <https://www.food.com/recipe/kharcho-georgian-beef-walnut-soup-with-fresh-herbs-16800>



Cheesy Potato and Corn Chowder

This simple dish makes a filling comfort food for cold winter nights. In a soup pot, combine two cans of condensed cheddar cheese soup with one can of milk over medium-high heat. Add two drained 15-ounce cans of diced potatoes and one drained can of corn, plus a teaspoon of onion powder, a dash of salt, and a quarter teaspoon of cayenne pepper. Stir for five to 10 minutes, until the soup is smoothly blended and bubbling slightly and the corn and potatoes are completely heated through. Serve with a sprinkling of fresh ground pepper and shredded sharp cheddar cheese.



White Bean Soup

This quick and easy recipe uses staple vegetables such as onions, carrots, and celery to make a flavorful base. Canned beans are inexpensive and instantly add protein and texture as the main star, given a boost by parmesan cheese. Keeping these simple ingredients on hand throughout the season means soup is within reach anytime. **Recipe:** [Serious Eats https://www.serious-eats.com/30-minute-tuscan-white-bean-soup-recipe](https://www.serious-eats.com/30-minute-tuscan-white-bean-soup-recipe)



Chicken Noodle Soup

Chicken noodle soup isn't just the classic [home remedy for the common cold](#); it's also a good way to use up chicken left over from previous meals. Take 1 pound (about 1.5 cups) of cooked chicken, diced or torn into pieces, and add it to four 14-ounce cans of chicken stock or broth. Stir in 1 cup of carrot slices (fresh or canned) and 1.5 cups of dried egg noodles or pasta. Add 1 teaspoon of onion powder, one-half teaspoon each of dried basil and oregano, one-quarter teaspoon of celery powder, plus salt and ground black pepper to taste. Bring everything to a boil, stirring occasionally, then reduce heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, or until the carrots and noodles are soft.



Rice and Pea Soup

This Italian dish is essentially a soup version of risotto, and every bit as comforting and filling. While the recipe is light on vegetables and doesn't include additional protein such as chicken or tofu, virtually anything would work added to the herby and parmesan enriched broth. **Recipe:** [Williams Sonoma https://www.thespruceeats.com/vegetarian-lentil-soup-recipe-low-fat-3377999](https://www.thespruceeats.com/vegetarian-lentil-soup-recipe-low-fat-3377999)



Sausage and Bean Soup

This cheap and hearty soup is a good way to stretch a small meat budget. Add 8 ounces of cooked diced sausage and three drained 15-ounce cans of navy or white beans to 56 ounces (four cans) of broth — beef, chicken, or vegetable broth will do. Add one bay leaf, 2 teaspoons of onion powder, and 1 teaspoon each of dried rosemary, salt, and pepper. Stir everything together over high heat and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10 to 12 minutes. Before serving, remove the bay leaf and sprinkle each bowl with grated Parmesan or Romano cheese.



Chipotle Chicken Soup

Infusing soup with classic Mexican flavors can satisfy the craving for a hearty feast in one nourishing bowl. The cheap canned chipotles in adobo sauce give a bold and smoky flavor to the soup; use more or less to personalize the spice level. Using [frozen or seasonal vegetables](#) is a good way to keep costs as low and flavors as fresh as possible. **Recipe:** [EatingWell](https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/251276/chipotle-chicken-vegetable-soup) <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/251276/chipotle-chicken-vegetable-soup>



Egg Drop Soup

This recipe is easy to make but does not keep well, so it should be made only in small portions (the usual serving size is one egg per person) and eaten fresh. In a small pot, empty one 14-ounce can of chicken stock, stir in one-half tablespoon of soy sauce plus one-half teaspoon of ground ginger, and heat everything to a boil. Meanwhile, beat two eggs together in a small bowl. When the stock is boiling, stir the beaten egg into it slowly, then reduce heat and simmer for one to three minutes. Serve immediately.



Italian Wedding Soup

Meatballs in soup transforms a simple bowl into something special. Aside from mini meatballs, the ingredients are minimal and inexpensive, featuring broth, eggs, greens, and seasonings. Served with a crusty loaf of bread, it becomes an entire meal. **Recipe:** [Food Network https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/italian-wedding-soup-3364138](https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchen/italian-wedding-soup-3364138)



Peanut Butter Soup

This filling, protein-rich soup is a favorite with kids. Melt half a cup (8 tablespoons, or one stick) of butter over medium heat, then stir in 1 tablespoon of white flour and one-half teaspoon of onion powder. Add 1 cup of creamy peanut butter, stirring constantly, until the peanut butter melts into a smooth, even paste. Slowly mix in two 14-ounce cans of chicken broth, plus a tablespoon of salt and a teaspoon of black pepper. For a spicier dish, add an additional quarter teaspoon of cayenne pepper. Raise the heat until the mixture reaches a boil, then reduce it immediately to a simmer. Cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring constantly, then remove from heat and add 1 cup of cream or half-and-half before serving.



Pozole

Pozole is a traditional soup enjoyed all over Mexico, and can be made in many different styles. One of the defining characteristics is the generous amount of plump hominy corn and a spiced broth. This recipe keeps costs minimal by using a whole chicken, which adds a ton of flavor and meat to the finished pot of soup. **Recipe:** [The Spruce Eats https://www.thespruceeats.com/posole-pork-and-hominy-stew-2217534](https://www.thespruceeats.com/posole-pork-and-hominy-stew-2217534)



Black Bean and Bacon Soup

This spicy, stick-to-your-ribs dish can be made in less than half an hour, once the bacon has been cooked. Take two 14-ounce cans of chicken broth (or one can each of broth and water, for a lighter-tasting soup). Pour the broth into a pot and add six slices of cooked bacon chopped into small pieces, plus two drained 15-ounce cans of black beans. Add one medium diced onion (or 1 tablespoon of onion powder), two cloves of crushed garlic or one-quarter teaspoon of garlic powder, one-half teaspoon of ground cumin, and one-eighth teaspoon of cayenne pepper, plus salt and black pepper to taste. Mix everything together over medium-high heat until the soup starts to simmer, then simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring frequently. For thicker soup, mash about half the beans once the water starts simmering, but make certain none of the smashed beans stick to the bottom or sides of the pot.



Butternut Squash Soup

A classic and a seasonal favorite, squash soup ticks all the right boxes of flavor, price, and being easy to make. Mix it up by using a different squash, or a variety of squashes, for variations in flavor and consistency. This impressive soup is made all from ingredients likely to already be in the house, such as carrots, onion, celery, and potatoes. **Recipe:** [Allrecipes](https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/77981/butternut-squash-soup-ii) <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/77981/butternut-squash-soup-ii>



Vegetarian Split Pea Soup

The classic split pea soup recipe is cooked with ham bones for added protein and flavor, but this lower-calorie, budget-friendly option gets its flavor from spices. Combine 2 cups of dried yellow or green split peas with three 14-ounce cans of vegetable stock (after first rinsing the peas to wash away grit). Add a bay leaf, a tablespoon each of salt and onion powder, 2 teaspoons of dry mustard powder, and either one-half teaspoon of garlic powder or four chopped garlic cloves. Leave the pot uncovered while bringing all ingredients to a boil; then cover and reduce heat to a simmer. Simmer for about an hour, stirring occasionally, until the peas are soft. For a smoother texture, purée the soup in a blender and heat for an additional five to 10 minutes before serving.



Curry Sweet Potato Soup

Curry and sweet potatoes' natural partnership is highlighted in this coconut-infused soup, which comes together with little more than sweet potatoes, curry, and coconut milk. The suggestion of spiced and baked chickpeas as a topping adds crunch. **Recipe:** [Minimalist Baker](https://minimalistbaker.com/sweet-potato-coconut-curry-soup)
<https://minimalistbaker.com/sweet-potato-coconut-curry-soup>



Beef Taco Soup

This filling meat soup brings warm Southwestern zest to cold winter nights. Brown 2 pounds of lean ground beef over medium heat, then drain and remove from heat. Mix 4 tablespoons of taco seasoning and 1 teaspoon each of black pepper and chili powder into the meat. Meanwhile, drain two 15-ounce cans of pinto beans, a 15-ounce can of corn, and one 4-ounce can of diced green chilies. Empty a 14-ounce can of beef broth into a soup pot and add the seasoned beef, beans, corn, and chilies, along with a 14.5-ounce can of stewed tomatoes. Stir well and bring to a boil before reducing the heat to a simmer. Cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 10 to 15 minutes until everything is heated through. Serve the soup as is, or with shredded sharp cheese sprinkled on top of each bowl.



Carrot Soup

Cold weather brings rich indulgent food, which can leave people feeling vegetable deprived. This thick and creamy carrot soup is a boost of vitamin- and mineral-rich carrots, along with ginger and lemon for complexity and brightness. Rich yet light, this is a healthy way to warm up without sacrificing flavor. **Recipe:** [Epicurious https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/carrot-soup-with-ginger-and-lemon-4083](https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/carrot-soup-with-ginger-and-lemon-4083)



Lentil-Tomato Soup

People have been eating lentils since at least the Paleolithic era, which means lentil soups might have been among the first recipes ever invented. For a basic lentil and tomato pantry soup, combine 1 cup of dried lentils with a 14-ounce can of chicken broth. Add 2 tablespoons of tomato paste, 1 tablespoon each of cumin and onion powder, a dash of cayenne pepper, and either two crushed cloves of garlic or one-quarter tablespoon of garlic powder. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 40 to 45 minutes or until the lentils are soft.



Roasted Red Pepper Soup

Bell peppers take on a deep and rich flavor when roasted, creating complex layers of flavor. While this recipe calls for canned roasted red peppers, roasting them at home and removing the skins could be cheaper and yield a flavor that is just as good, if not better. **Recipe:** [Taste of Home](https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/roasted-red-peppers-soup)
<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/roasted-red-peppers-soup>



Creamy Cauliflower Soup

For this surprisingly substantial soup, start with one small head (about 4 cups) of cauliflower, chopped into florets (let frozen florets thaw completely). Add a half-cup of chopped onion, one clove of garlic, 2 cups each of milk and chicken broth, and 1 cup of cooked (or canned and drained) diced potato. Combine in a large saucepan and add 4 ounces of softened cream cheese. Cook over medium heat until the cauliflower is soft, and add a teaspoon of ground black pepper and a half-teaspoon each of dried thyme and parsley. [Pour everything into a blender](#) or food processor and purée until liquefied. (For a chunkier soup, remove about half the potatoes before pouring the soup into the blender, then recombine after blending.)



Cheddar Broccoli Soup

Everyone loves broccoli when it is coated in cheese, which is really what this soup is all about. This recipe is similar to building a sauce for mac and cheese, just with more broth and the addition of broccoli. Using frozen broccoli if it is less expensive works just as well, after giving it a quick rinse to take off any freezer burn. **Recipe:** [Cafe Delites https://cafedelites.com/easy-broccoli-cheese-soup](https://cafedelites.com/easy-broccoli-cheese-soup)



Irish Potato Soup

This thrifty recipe is usually made from ham or chicken stock, but vegetarians can substitute vegetable broth. Melt a tablespoon of margarine or butter over medium heat in a large stock pot. Heat 6 cups of peeled, chopped raw potato, and 1 cup of chopped white or yellow onion in the melted butter, stirring frequently, for about 15 minutes or until they begin to soften. (Do *not* heat them to the browning point.) Add 4 cups of stock or broth and 2 cups of milk, plus a half-teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of ground pepper. Mix well and bring to a low simmer, stirring frequently. Serve as is for a chunky soup, or purée in a blender until smooth. Garnish with parsley or a sprinkling of sharp shredded cheese.



French Onion Soup

[French onion soup is a classic](#) that many people think of as fancy and extra special. The truth: It's time consuming, but very inexpensive to make. Make it when bags of onions go on sale. Making your own beef broth from bones from the butcher yields the most flavorful and inexpensive base.

Recipe: [The Kitchn](https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-make-french-onion-soup-cooking-lessons-from-the-kitchn-110054) <https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-make-french-onion-soup-cooking-lessons-from-the-kitchn-110054>



Easy Tomato Soup

This recipe uses [convenient canned ingredients](#) to make a hearty dish in less than a half-hour. In a saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil or melted butter over medium heat. Cook 1 cup of chopped raw onion and four cloves of minced garlic in the butter for about five minutes or until softened. Add 3 cups of stock or broth, 3 ounces (half a can) of tomato paste, a 28-ounce can of stewed tomatoes, a teaspoon of ground black pepper, and half a teaspoon of salt. (For a spicier soup, try adding a teaspoon of chili powder, too.) Mix well over high heat and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and simmer for 15 minutes. Purée in a blender, then serve immediately.



New England Clam Chowder

A small portion of this heavy soup goes a long way as an appetizer, while a regular sized bowl is more of a meal in itself. The only specialty ingredient needed to make an authentic batch are the clams. Using jarred clams works if high-quality fresh clams aren't available; just be sure to compare costs, because fresh clams are not always pricier. **Recipe:** [Fine Cooking https://www.finecooking.com/recipe/rhode-island-clam-chowder](https://www.finecooking.com/recipe/rhode-island-clam-chowder)



Beef and Bean Weekender Chili

This spicy chili recipe is easy to prepare; the hard part is waiting two to three hours for it to cook. In a large stock pot, start with 2 pounds of ground beef, browned and drained of fat. Add 2 cups of water, a 29-ounce can of tomato sauce, a 15-ounce can of kidney beans, and two 15-ounce cans of pinto beans, including liquid. Add 1 cup each of diced raw onion and diced, de-seeded green bell pepper. Then add 1.5 tablespoons of chili powder, a teaspoon of ground cumin, one stalk of diced celery, and 2 teaspoons each of salt and black pepper. Combine all ingredients over low heat and bring to a simmer. Cook uncovered for two to three hours, stirring every 10 minutes or so. It might be necessary to add small amounts of water as the chili cooks.



Tom Kha Gai Soup

This spiced and creamy coconut-based Thai soup can be a welcome change of pace for a staid soup repertoire. Though a chicken soup, it's heavy on ginger and mushroom, which some people think of as healing or a way to keep immunities in top shape to ward off winter colds. Adding another protein could make it into a heartier one-pot meal. **Recipe:** [Bon Appetit https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/tom-kha-gai-chicken-coconut-soup](https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/tom-kha-gai-chicken-coconut-soup)



Chicken Tortilla Soup

This soup works as a self-contained meal, combining meat, veggies, and bread in one dish. In a saucepan, empty a 14-ounce can of diced tomatoes and 4-ounce can of diced green chilies, liquid included. Add two 14-ounce cans of chicken broth and one 16-ounce can of refried beans, plus a half-cup of canned or frozen corn (drained or thawed, as needed). Add a teaspoon each of chili powder and ground black pepper, plus a half-teaspoon of salt. Stir and bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat to low. Add 2 cups of cooked cubed chicken and simmer for five minutes, stirring frequently, until chicken is heated through. Remove from heat and serve immediately, garnishing each bowl with crumbled tortilla chips.



Vegan Lentil Soup

Lentils are comforting and hearty, which make them ideal for turning into soup. This vegan version is suitable for almost all dietary restrictions, which means everyone can enjoy the same meal together. **Recipe:** [The Spruce Eats](https://www.thespruceeats.com/vegetarian-lentil-soup-recipe-low-fat-3377999) <https://www.thespruceeats.com/vegetarian-lentil-soup-recipe-low-fat-3377999>

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