

Soup!

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Food has an amazing power over people, it has the ability to de-stress, relax and make someone happy. It also has the ability to allow people to feel certain emotions and relieve memories and experiences just by being eaten. Growing up food was the cord that tied my family together. I can honestly say most of the most memorable moments in my life were surrounded by food. A large part of my childhood was spent sitting on counters watching various family members cook and receiving impromptu culinary lessons. Some of my favorite memories are making caramel sauce for flan with my dad and learning from my uncle how to make the best Thanksgiving Day gravy ever.

I've always loved winter, which I considered soup season. One of my favorite things in the world to eat is soup. It really doesn't matter what kind; I've always enjoyed them all. Something about soup has always soothed and relaxed me, and given me an overall feeling of warmth and happiness. Personally the best soup experience was when my grandmother and mother would join forces and make sancocho. They would spend hours in the kitchen and I would always sit patiently on the counter watching everything they did, dying for my chance to eat an enormous bowl with white rice. My whole family would make fun of me and thought it was completely weird that a kid was obsessed with soup. My mother loved it because it was the only way she could get me to eat any kind of vegetables. I lived for soup season.

As a child I really thought I was the only person in the world obsessed with soup, but taking culinary classes as an adult I realized I wasn't alone. Taking culinary classes showed me the importance placed so heavily on the productions of stocks, sauces, and soups. So much so that we would spend weeks on end just focusing on each one. Eventually my obsession with soup became an obsession with making perfect stock, practicing endlessly my sauce productions and trying to come up with ways to improve on my soups.

Soups fall into three classifications: clear, thick and specialty/national soups. Clear soups are divided into three parts as well, the first being broth and bouillon, which are clear and flavorful with no solid ingredients included. The second is vegetable soup, which is also clear and includes one or many vegetables; it may also include meat and starches. The third is called consommé, which is a very flavorful and decadent stock or broth that has all the fat removed to make it transparent (Gisslen, 2004).

Thick soups are broken down into five subsections. Cream soups which have a thickening agent added along with milk/cream. Purees are naturally thickened with starches or vegetables; these soups often do not have milk or cream added and are not as

smooth as cream soups. Bisques are thick soups made normally with shellfish and finished with cream. Chowders are normally made from fish, shellfish and vegetables; more often than not, they contain milk and potatoes. Potage is the final type of thick soup and is normally considered to be a thick hearty type of soup. Specialty and national soups are made up of all other soups that do not fit into the previous categories. A soup is normally considered a specialty or national soup when it consists of unusual ingredients only available in particular areas. Cold soups tend to be lumped into this category as well (Walter, 2011).

Making and eating Sancocho with my family allowed me to develop such a passion for soup; hopefully sharing this recipe will help you develop a passion for soup as well!

Sancocho

Ingredients:

1 lb. boneless pork, cut in 1-inch cubes 1 lb. pork bones with meat
4 quarts water
1 tbsp. salt
3 ears of corn cut in small pieces
2 green plantains, peeled, quartered, sprinkled with lemon juice
2 lbs. yucca, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
2 lbs. ñame, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
2 malangas, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
2 white sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
½ Hubbard squash, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
6 oz Sofrito
2 whole ripe plantains, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes

1. In large pot, combine meat, bones, water and salt. Bring to boil; skim, lower heat and simmer.
2. Stir in corn and green plantain. Cook 1/2 hour.
3. Stir in yucca, ñame and malanga. Cook 1/2 hour.
4. Stir in sweet potatoes, pumpkin, Sazón and Sofrito. Put ripe plantains on top so they do not dissolve.
5. Cook 1/2 hour or until all vegetables are tender

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