

If you become frazzled trying to dazzle your friends with a bounty of razzmatrazz, here's the soup on serving up soup in a style that's sure to delight any group!

Forget fret and frenzy. Forget spending two days cooking for a few hours of party. Forget polishing silver and ironing tablecloths.

Everyone is busy today and many of us can't find time for traditional entertaining. But, chances are, your friends would be thrilled to attend a casual, last-minute party. Casual, however, doesn't mean the food can't look and taste wonderful, with little time and effort on your part.

One great idea is to serve a soup buffet. January is National Soup Month and it's the perfect time to explore the entertaining possibilities of soup. Make it yourself or call on one of the many convenient forms in which it's available at your market, then add your own festive touches.

Soup can be a meal in a bowl or a light accompaniment to other foods... or it can be both. Soup also helps you and your guests keep your New Year's resolutions about lighter eating and good nutrition. In addition, it's a soothing food, a food that makes you feel warm and comfortable.

Ninety years ago, in 1897, canned condensed soup was one of the first convenience foods to be generally available to the public. It delivered rich flavor without the long hours of simmering that had been necessary before.

Today we take for granted the easy access we have to top quality broths and condensed and ready-to-serve soups, as well as the new dry and frozen varieties. The family of soups continues to grow with more exciting flavors and more convenient forms.

For your soup buffet, you might choose to feature soups of one cuisine - Italian, for example. Escarole and Rice Soup begins with condensed chicken broth in which you simply cook the escarole and rice. Classic Pasta e Fagioli takes a shortcut using ready-to-serve ham and bean soup. Heat homemade-tasting minestrone straight from the can and garnish with a flavorful parsley pesto to make one of the party's biggest hits, Presto Minestrone.

These soups can be assembled in short order, then left to simmer so their tempting aromas will greet arriving guests and put them in the party spirit.

Carry through the Italian theme with Caponata, a refreshing eggplant appetizer you eat on Italian bread. Prepare it ahead of time so the flavors can blend, and that's one less thing to worry about on the day of the party. This caponata's great flavor also starts with soup.

No one can resist spectacular Tricolor Pizza. Dry onion soup mix gives the crust a savory goodness that's complemented by the zesty tomato soup and sausage topping. Red, yellow and green peppers add the showy final touch.

Make serving comfortable by setting up the buffet table in an easily accessible location. Keep the soup hot over warming candles, or on warming trays, in slow cookers or in thermal servers. Provide plenty of mugs or deep bowls with generous liners for the soup; high quality paper or plastic bowls work perfectly well.

Once you get the food on the table, your only duties are to encourage guests to serve themselves, keep the conversation sparkling and enjoy your own party!

For more creative recipes and serving suggestions to help you celebrate National Soup Month, send a stamped self-addressed business size envelope to:

Celebrate With Soup
P.O. Box 1232
Bensalem, PA 19020

Tricolor Pizza

- 1 pouch Onion Soup and Recipe Mix
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 3/4 cup very warm water (120° to 130°F)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound Italian sausage, casing removed
- 2 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (11 ounces) Condensed Zesty Tomato Soup/Sauce
- 1 teaspoon wine vinegar
- 2 cups thinly sliced green, red and yellow peppers
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese (8 ounces)

1. In medium bowl, combine soup mix, 1 cup of the flour, sugar and yeast; mix well. With mixer at low speed, gradually pour warm water and oil into dry ingredients; beat until just mixed. At medium speed, beat 4 minutes, scraping bowl often.
2. With spoon, stir in about 3/4 cup flour or enough to make a soft dough. On floured surface, knead dough about 5 minutes until smooth and elastic, adding more flour as necessary.
3. Grease 15- by 10-inch jelly-roll pan. On floured surface, roll dough 1 inch larger all around than pan. Transfer to pan. Turn edge under to form rim.
4. Let rise in warm place (80° to 85°F), free from draft, 20 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, in 10-inch skillet over medium heat, brown sausage with garlic, stirring to separate meat. Spoon off fat. Add soup and vinegar. Heat through.
6. Preheat oven to 400°F. Bake crust 5 minutes; remove from oven. Spread sausage mixture over crust and top with pepper strips; sprinkle with cheese. Bake 15 minutes more or until crust is lightly browned. Makes 12 servings.

Calories per serving: 234
Mg. Sodium per serving: 586

Kick Off A SOUPER BUFFET



Escarole and Rice Soup

- 1 head escarole (about 1 pound)
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 2 cans (10 3/4 ounces each) Condensed Chicken Broth
- 2 soup cans water
- 1/2 cup uncooked rice
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- Chopped pimiento for garnish

1. Cut escarole crosswise into 1/2-inch strips.
2. In 4-quart saucepan over medium heat, in hot butter, brown onion, stirring occasionally. Add escarole. Cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
3. Add broth and water. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat to low. Cover; simmer 25 minutes or until escarole is tender.
4. Add rice. Cover; simmer 20 minutes more or until rice is tender, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat.
5. Stir in cheese. Garnish with pimiento. Makes 6 cups or 8 servings.

Calories per serving: 140
Mg. Sodium per serving: 627

Pasta e Fagioli

- 2 cans (19-1/4 ounces each) Old Fashioned Bean 'n Ham Soup
- 1 can (about 15 ounces) tomatoes, drained and cut up
- 2 cups water
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 2/3 cup uncooked ditalini or small shell pasta
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- Grated Parmesan cheese

1. In 3-quart saucepan over medium heat, heat soup, tomatoes, water, garlic and pepper to boiling. Reduce heat to low. Cover; simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Add pasta and parsley. Simmer 12 minutes more or until pasta is tender, stirring often. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese. Makes 6 1/2 cups or 8 servings.

Calories per serving: 175
Mg. Sodium per serving: 587

Presto Minestrone

- 1/4 cup toasted slivered or sliced almonds
- 1 cup fresh parsley sprigs
- 1 medium clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 can (19 ounces) Minestrone Soup, heated

1. To make pesto: In covered blender container or food processor, combine almonds, parsley, garlic, Parmesan, oil and lemon juice. Blend until smooth. Makes 3/4 cup pesto.

2. To serve: Ladle hot soup into 2 bowls. Garnish with 1 tablespoon pesto. Makes 2 servings.

NOTE: To store remaining pesto: In container, cover pesto with thin layer oil. Cover and refrigerate up to 1 month.

Calories per tablespoon pesto: 66
Mg. Sodium per tablespoon pesto: 33

Caponata

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 medium eggplant, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 medium onion, sliced and separated into rings
- 1 can (10 1/2 ounces) Condensed Crispy Gazpacho Soup
- 1 teaspoon dried basil leaves, crushed
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup sliced pitted ripe olives
- 1 tablespoon capers

1. In 4-quart saucepan over medium heat, in hot oil, cook eggplant and onion 10 minutes or until onion is tender, stirring often.
2. Stir in soup, basil and pepper. Reduce heat to low. Cover; simmer 15 minutes or until eggplant is tender. Remove from heat.
3. Stir in olives and capers. Serve hot or cold with crusty bread. Makes 4 cups.

Calories per tablespoon: 21
Mg. Sodium per tablespoon: 37

