

'Beet' the heat with chilled soup

BY DANA JACOBI
SPECIAL WRITER

"It's not the taste, it's the way the glass looks after you drink it," to paraphrase Shelly Berman, a comedian who nailed the American aversion to buttermilk. Indeed, the thickness and the lacy network it leaves on the inside of the glass are the main reasons people shun this tangy refresher.

On a simmering hot day, nothing beats the bracing chill of a glass of cold buttermilk, but let's not even go there. Rather, think of buttermilk as a versatile and appealing ingredient. In fact, it is one you may already like: Buttermilk is essential in authentic, creamy, all-American ranch dressing. It adds lively piquancy to cold soups, makes luscious, velvety smoothies and creates tender, cloud-light pancakes.

The word "buttermilk" is, in fact, a misnomer. It contains no butter. It is actually the liquid left after cream is separated out to be churned into butter. One reason people do not like farm-fresh buttermilk was the tiny

flakes of butter punctuating it. Today, that is a distant memory. Buttermilk is now cultured in dairy plants, where special bacteria are added. As with yogurt, these friendly organisms convert the milk's sugar into lactic acid, providing the characteristic, tart taste. And, as with yogurt, the change in this sugar means buttermilk can be tolerated by some people who are lactose intolerant.

A friend recently reminisced about a robust, richly vibrant cold beet soup for which she had lost the recipe. We quickly determined that buttermilk was the key ingredient. Few summer soups are easier to make, and more enticing. Its stunning color creates a beautiful, irresistible sight.

COLD BEET SOUP

1 pound (about 2 medium) beets
1 cup low-fat or fat-free buttermilk
1/4 cup non-fat plain yogurt
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt and ground white pepper

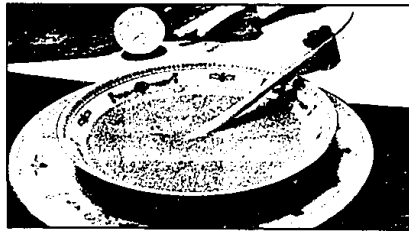
per, to taste
1/4 cup chopped dill leaves, for garnish
2 scallions, green part only, finely chopped, for garnish

Scrub beets well, retaining 1- to 2-inch stems on each. Place in deep pot. Add water to cover. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat, cover and cook until beets are soft when pierced with knife or fork tines, about 40 minutes. Cool beets completely in cooking liquid. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup cooking liquid.

Using rubber gloves to avoid staining hands, cut away top and bottom of beets, then use fingers to peel. Coarsely chop beets. Place in blender. Add reserved cooking liquid, buttermilk, yogurt and lemon juice. Puree until smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Chill soup from 2 hours to overnight. Adjust seasoning and divide among 4 shallow soup bowls. Garnish each with one-quarter of dill and scallions and serve.

This soup keeps in refrigerator,



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tightly covered, for 3 days. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional information per serving: 68 calories, less than 1 g. fat (less than 1 g. saturated fat), 12 g. carbohydrate, 4 g. protein, 2 g. dietary fiber, 133 mg. sodium.

Dana Jacobi writes for the American Institute for Cancer Research and is the author of *The Joy of Soy*.

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Read Sports

Chili cooks wanted for cookoff

The Plymouth Fall Festival features the 23rd Annual Michigan State Chili Championship cookoff Saturday, Sept. 8.

Competitors will help raise money for the many community service groups of Plymouth including the Rotary, the Lions Club, Kiwanis Club and many others.

A limited number of cooks will be accepted. A salsa competition also will be held. Entry fees are \$35 for International Chili Society members and \$30 for new members for the chili cookoff. Salsa entrants pay a fee of \$25 for non-chili cooks and \$10 for chili cooks.

For information and applications, call Annette Horn, chili cookoff chairperson, at (734) 455-8838.

Schoolcraft's American Harvest opens Aug. 29

The American Harvest Restaurant, Schoolcraft College's student-operated, fine-dining establishment, opens to the public for lunches Wednesday, Aug. 29.

The restaurant also presents a full schedule of five-course international dinners through December 13 and Wednesday grazing nights.

Students from Schoolcraft's renowned culinary arts department prepare and serve lunches featuring fresh ingredients assembled into gourmet dishes and prepared under the supervision of certified master chefs. All foods are made fresh daily, including soup stocks and sausages, with menu choices including bread, soup, salad, assorted entrees and a choice of desserts. All items are a la carte.

The American Harvest offers a

quiet, formal venue for entertaining business clients or gathering with friends. Lunch is served Tuesday through Friday from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., and reservations are recommended.

The restaurant will close December 11 for final exams and reopen in January. To make reservations, call 734-462-4488.

The public can also enjoy a generous buffet breakfast Tuesday through Friday in the Waterman Campus Center for \$4 per plate. Call (734) 462-4423 for morning serving hours.

The popular international dinners, prepared by second-year students in the International Cuisine class, continue this fall. Each Thursday evening, diners enjoy a sumptuous five-course meal drawing from the dishes of a particular area or country. This year's dinners spotlight regional American, Hungarian,

Chinese/Cantonese, Italian, French, Spanish, Irish, Indian, Greek and Russian foods. Diners include wine and a brief presentation on the origin of both the food and wine.

The dinners are \$32.95 plus tax, except for the French dinners, which are \$34.95. Reservations are necessary and can be made by calling (734) 462-4488.

Service begins at 6:45 p.m.

For an unusual dining experience, come to a Grazing Night on these Wednesdays: Sept. 19 or 26; Oct. 24 or 31; Nov. 28; or Dec. 5. Diners mingle in the culinary arts kitchen and sample a wide variety of dishes created under the guidance of Certified Master Chef Jeffrey Gabriel, owner of The Farm Restaurant in Port Austin. Grazing Nights are \$18 per person. Call (734) 462-4423 for reservations.

The Professor's Pantry is another opportunity for community members to enjoy the products of culinary arts students.

Each Tuesday through Friday beginning Aug. 29 specialties such as fresh bread, pastries, soups, pasta and salads and dressing are on sale between 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Once again, Schoolcraft students will help you enjoy a warm, stress-free Thanksgiving. The dinner is \$169.95. You can order a Thanksgiving dinner starting Oct. 25 by calling (734) 462-4491.

The American Harvest Restaurant and Professor's Pantry are located in the Waterman Center on the north end of Schoolcraft's Livonia campus.

Schoolcraft College is located at 18600 Haggerty Road, between Six and Seven Mile roads, just west of I-275.

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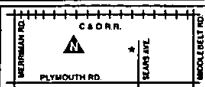
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