

- 1 ounce (1 cup) dried fine egg noodles
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1-2 scallions, thinly sliced (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon Asian sesame oil, or to taste
- Salt

Combine stock, sherry, soy sauce, ginger, and garlic in a 2-quart heavy saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove ginger and garlic with a slotted spoon and discard. Stir in noodles, then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until tender, about 4 minutes.

Stirring soup in a circular motion, add eggs in a slow, steady stream. Simmer, undisturbed, until strands of egg are cooked, about 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in scallions and sesame oil. Season with salt and serve.

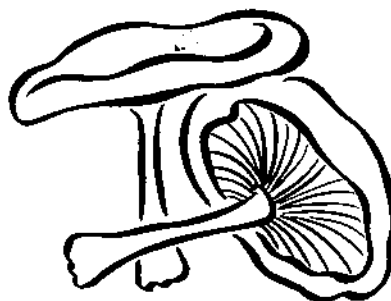
Shiitake-Bok Choy Soup with Noodles

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MINUTES START TO FINISH: 20 MINUTES

▢ This quick Asian soup gets depth of flavor and a smoky sweetness from *katsuobushi*, or dried bonito flakes (made from a fish related to mackerel and tuna). You can use Chinese wheat noodles or thin Japanese wheat or buckwheat noodles, which can all be found in natural foods stores and some supermarkets as well as Asian markets (or see Sources for mail-order information). Contributed by *Gourmet* reader Beth Nicholson, of Ashland, Massachusetts, this soup won instant approval in our test kitchens.

- 6 cups water
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (one 8-gram package) dried bonito flakes (*katsuobushi*; see Glossary)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound bok choy, cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound shiitake mushrooms, stems discarded and caps thinly sliced
- 6 ounces thin Asian wheat or buckwheat noodles (see headnote)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 6 scallions, cut diagonally into thin slices (1 cup)



Combine water and bonito flakes in a 5- to 6-quart pot, bring to a boil, and boil for 1 minute. Pour stock through a fine-mesh sieve into a large bowl; discard bonito flakes or reserve for another use (see Cook's Note on page 92).

Return stock to pot and add bok choy, mushrooms, and noodles. Bring to a simmer and simmer, uncovered, until noodles are tender, 2 to 5 minutes, depending on type of noodle. Stir in salt, pepper, and scallions and serve.

Tortilla Soup with Crisp Tortillas and Avocado Relish

SERVES 8 (MAKES ABOUT 9 CUPS)

ACTIVE TIME: 40 MINUTES START TO FINISH: 1 HOUR
PLUS ADDITIONAL TIME IF MAKING STOCK

Earthy and elemental, this is comfort food, Mexican style—and anything but pedestrian. Fried corn tortillas are used as a flavoring and a thickener, and roasted vegetables add great flavor. Ancho chiles (deep, rich, fruity) and guajillos (spicy and sweet) are both workhorses of the Mexican kitchen. This soup, offset beautifully by a crisp fried tortilla garnish and a cool, bright avocado relish, is from the masterful Robert Del Grande, of Café Annic, in Houston.

FOR SOUP

- 1/2 white onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 pound plum tomatoes
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 dried guajillo chiles (see Glossary), stemmed, seeded, and ribs discarded
- 2 dried ancho chiles (see Glossary), stemmed, seeded, and ribs discarded
- About 1 1/2 cups peanut oil or vegetable oil for deep-frying
- 10 (5- to 6-inch) white corn tortillas, cut into 1/4-inch-wide strips
- 8 cups (64 ounces) chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium broth
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

FOR AVOCADO RELISH

- 2 firm but ripe California avocados
- 1 small tomato, finely chopped
- 2/3 cup finely chopped white onion
- 1-2 serrano chiles (to taste), seeded if desired and finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, plus 8 fresh cilantro sprigs
- 2 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon coarsely crushed black peppercorns

ACCOMPANIMENT: lime wedges

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: a deep-fat thermometer

MAKE THE SOUP: Preheat broiler.

Arrange onion, tomatoes, and garlic in one layer in a baking pan and broil about 2 inches from heat, turning occasionally with tongs, until tomato skins are blistered and lightly charred, 10 to 15 minutes. Let cool.

Heat a dry griddle or heavy skillet over moderate heat until very hot but not smoking. Toast chiles 1 or 2 at a time, pressing down with tongs, until more pliable, a few seconds on each side. Transfer to a bowl. Add hot water to cover chiles and soak until soft, about 20 minutes.

Drain chiles and transfer to a blender. Add vegetable mixture and purée until smooth.

Heat 1/2 inch oil in a 9-inch heavy skillet until it registers 375°F on thermometer. Fry tortilla strips in

5 batches, turning, until crisp and pale golden, 30 seconds to 1 minute per batch. Transfer to paper towels to drain. (Return oil to 375°F between batches.)

Put two thirds of tortilla strips in a plastic bag and finely crush with a rolling pin.

Combine stock and chile purée in a 5-quart heavy pot and bring to a boil, stirring. Stir in crushed tortilla strips, oregano, and salt and simmer, uncovered, whisking occasionally, until tortillas are soft and soup is slightly thickened, 30 to 45 minutes. If necessary, season soup with salt and pepper.

MEANWHILE, MAKE THE RELISH: Quarter avocados. Pit, peel, and cut into 1/4-inch dice. Gently stir together avocados, tomato, onion, chiles, chopped cilantro, lime juice, salt, and crushed peppercorns in a bowl until well combined.

Divide relish, remaining tortilla strips, and cilantro sprigs among eight soup plates and ladle soup over mixture. Serve with lime wedges.

Pea Soup *Potage Saint-Germain*

SERVES 6 (MAKES ABOUT 8 CUPS)

ACTIVE TIME: 35 MINUTES START TO FINISH: 45 MINUTES
PLUS ADDITIONAL TIME IF MAKING STOCK

Dinner guests will presume you spent hours making this sublime soup, but in fact *potage Saint-Germain* is French food fast. Lettuce is often paired with peas because it adds a fresh, almost grassy sweetness.

FOR CROUTONS

- 1 baguette or loaf Italian bread, crusts discarded if desired and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (1 1/2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- Salt

FOR SOUP

- 1 1/2 cups chopped leeks (white parts only; 2 large leeks)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 cups (24 ounces) chicken stock or store-bought low-sodium broth
- 2 cups water
- 2 (10-ounce) packages frozen peas, thawed, or 4 cups shelled fresh peas