

## Soup...Versatile Comfort Food

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Few foods are more comforting than a warm, delicious bowl of soup after being out on a cold day. I enjoy making soup since there are so many different flavor combinations and nearly all of them are a one-pot meal! Many are easily prepared in the morning with a slow cooker so a warm, satisfying meal can be waiting later in the day when you are ready to eat.



Many soup recipes contain a variety of vegetables and some whole grains, making them a nutrient-packed choice, and making soups at home lets you control the amount of salt and fat. You can prepare soups using fresh seasonal produce, or choose canned or frozen varieties since all are equally nutritious. For better health, choose broth-based soups over creamier soups which are often high in fat and calories

With some planning, soups and stews can be an easy, healthy, affordable, and delicious dinner idea. Just add a bag of salad and a loaf of whole-grain bread for a quick, complete meal on a busy day.

### Some tips for great soups and stews include:

1. If using canned broth, choose the reduced-sodium varieties and season with salt-free herbs and spices. Add fresh herbs to soups at the end of the cooking time, as most lose their flavor and aroma when cooked too long.
2. Freeze the cooking liquid from vegetables or roasts to add flavor and nutrients to homemade soups and stews.
3. When possible, prepare soups and stews a day ahead and refrigerate. Any fat will solidify and rise to the surface, where it can be removed easily.
4. Brown meat before adding to a soup or stew to add extra flavor.
5. If using leftover cooked vegetables in a soup, add them during the last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking as they only need to be reheated.
6. Puréed cooked vegetables or potatoes make a healthy thickener for soups and stews.
7. If your soup or stew seems too salty, add a peeled and quartered raw potato. The potato will soak up some of the salt. Simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, and remove the potato before serving.

**No recipe needed.**

Soups are also a great way to use leftovers and put together low-cost meals in minutes. Try a soup night once a week. Freeze leftover vegetables, rice, beans and meat throughout the week to create a homemade soup. For this, you don't really need a recipe. With a supply of canned broth on hand, some onions and garlic, and a good supply of leftovers, you can easily create your own tasty soups. Here's how:

1. Sauté onions and garlic in a Dutch oven.
2. Add canned broth, leftover vegetables and meats, and your favorite seasonings. Canned tomatoes or beans can be added if desired.
3. Simmer and serve.

With some creativity, you can easily combine various ingredients to come up with a new soup each week without spending a lot of money. Versatile comfort food...Yum.

For more information about these programs and others, contact the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Wilson County, 620-378-2167; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district](http://www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district).

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