

K's Kitchen: A chowder without any clams

By Kathryn Reed

One of the good things about cookbooks is authors will put together ingredients I would never have thought of combining. My leap of faith to trust the author has backfired from time to time, but usually the recipe is a keeper.



Such was the case recently as I was in search of new soup recipes. It seems like I've already gone through my usuals and it isn't even technically winter.

I really liked the recipe below because it is different, the flavor is great and it was thick. Sometimes soups that are more broth than anything else don't seem like a meal. Sue liked the soup, but was not as enamored as I was with it.

I don't really know how much corn I used because during the summer I had blanched ears of corn and then froze the kernels. And one of the two bags I used had green and red peppers in it.

I didn't use any salt because I think soy sauce is pretty darn salty. I used a full 2 T of soy sauce.

As for the mushrooms, I'm pretty sure what I have are wood ear mushrooms that I got in San Francisco. But the packaging doesn't say. There is a Chinese market in the Town and Country Center in South Lake Tahoe where Whiskey Dicks is.

This recipe is from "The New Moosewood Cookbook" by Mollie Katzen. All the comments below are hers.

Chinese Vegetable Chowder (4 to 6 servings)

Simple and delicious – made with no dairy products no eggs, no oil, no garlic, no onions!

The mushrooms need to soak for at least 30 to 40 minutes ahead of time, and this can be done a day or two in advance.

2 ounces dried Chinese black mushrooms

5 C boiling water

1 pound package frozen corn, defrosted

1-1½ tsp salt

1-2 T soy sauce

black pepper, to taste

1 medium carrot, diced

1 stalk celery, minced

1 8-ounce can water chestnuts, minced

Place the mushrooms in a medium-large bowl, and pour in the boiling water. Cover with a plate and let stand for at least 30 to 40 minutes, or until the mushrooms are soaked through and very soft. Drain well, reserving both the mushrooms and the water, squeezing all the excess liquid from the mushrooms. Place the mushrooms on a cutting board and slice thinly, removing and discarding their tough stems.

Combine the mushroom water and the corn in a food processor or blender, and puree until as smooth as possible. (You will probably have to do this in more than one batch.) Transfer to a kettle or a large saucepan. (For a smoother soup, you can strain the puree on its way into the kettle.) Stir in salt, soy sauce, and black pepper to taste.

Lightly steam the carrot and the celery until just tender. (If you have one, a microwave oven will do this in 2 minutes.)

Add sliced mushrooms from step 1, carrot, celery, and water chestnuts to the soup. Heat gently just before serving.