

3. Czech Christmas Meal 2024

Christmas Fish Soup

6 servings

Ingredients:

Fish:

2 PIECES (about $\frac{3}{4}$ LB) of tilapia fillets - skinless *

2 TBSP of Extra Virgin Olive Oil - adjust if needed

Juice from $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

Pinch of salt - ideally freshly ground

Pinch of pepper - ideally freshly ground

Soup base:

2 TBSP of frying oil - adjust if needed

1 onion - peeled and chopped

2 medium potatoes – peeled and chopped

2 medium carrots – peeled and chopped

2 celery ribs – chopped

6 cups of fish broth/stock (or chicken or vegetable broth/stock) **

1 TBSP of dried parsley (or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fresh, chopped)

2 bay leaves

$\frac{1}{2}$ **TSP** of ground allspice

1 cup of heavy cream

1 clove of garlic - peeled and grated

$\frac{1}{4}$ **TSP** of ground nutmeg

$\frac{3}{4}$ **TSP** of salt **

$\frac{1}{2}$ **TSP** of ground pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ **cup** of peas – fresh or frozen (no prior defrosting necessary)

Best served with:

Croutons

Bread of any kind

*Czechs and Slovaks would usually use carp, which is hard to get in the USA. For that reason, I'm using tilapia, which is not the same, but it is fairly close. Feel free to use other kinds of white fish as well. You

can use fresh, defrosted, or even fully frozen fish—in the latter case, preparation in the oven may take 2–3 minutes longer.

**This recipe assumes that you are working with a sodium-free broth (a broth with no salt added). If you are working with a broth that includes sodium, adjust the amount of salt based on your preference.

Tools:

Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups

Chef's Knife & Cutting Board

Baking sheet with parchment paper

Optionally: Lemon Squeezer

Large Saucepan or Medium Pot (about 6 QT)

Tongs

Wooden Spoon or High-Temperature Silicone Spatula

Immersion Blender or Food Processor or Blender

Small Hand Grater or Garlic Press (for garlic)

Directions:

1. Fish preparation:

1.1. **Set oven to preheat to 350°F.**

1.2. **Prepare:**

1.2.1. Ensure the fish fillets are properly rinsed under cold water.

1.2.2. Dry fish with a paper towel if needed.

1.2.3. Place fish fillets on a baking sheet with parchment paper.

1.2.4. Pour and sprinkle these ingredients on both sides of each fillet (each side should have about 1/4 of the ingredients shown; adjust if needed):

1.2.4.1. Squeeze lemon and pour olive oil.

1.2.4.2. Generously salt and pepper.

1.3. **Roast:**

1.3.1. Place into the preheated oven and roast until fully cooked (usually about 12 – 15 minutes). *

1.3.2. When done, remove from the oven and shred into small pieces with forks.

- 1.3.3. Set aside from the later steps at room temperature. It will be placed into the soup for the last 5 minutes, which will gently heat up the fish.

Note:

You can complete all steps before proceeding with step 2, or you can start working on step 2 right after you place the fish into the oven in step 1.3.1. This would speed up the process but would also require multitasking.

2. Sauté vegetables:

- 2.1. Meanwhile preheat a medium pot on medium-high heat with **2 TBSP** of frying oil and add:

1 onion - chopped

Sauté with occasional stirring until glossy (about 2 - 4 minutes).

- 2.2. Add:

2 medium potatoes – chopped

2 medium carrots – chopped

2 celery ribs – chopped

Sauté for an additional 2 minutes with constant stirring.

3. Simmering:

- 3.1. Add into the pot:

6 cups of fish broth

1 TBSP of dried parsley

2 bay leaves

½ TSP of ground allspice

Briefly stir and cover with a lid. Bring to a simmer (about 195°F) with occasional stirring.

- 3.2. Lower the heat to medium and cook until all vegetables soften with occasional stirring (usually about 20 - 30 minutes).

4. Finishing phase:

- 4.1. Remove and discard the bay leaves.

4.2. Process until smooth with an immersion blender (while still cooking in a pot).

4.3. Add:

1 cup of heavy cream

1 clove of garlic – grated or pressed

¼ TSP of ground nutmeg

¾ TSP of salt

½ TSP of ground pepper

½ cup of peas

Shredded fish from step 1

Briefly stir together and cook with occasional stirring for an additional 5 minutes (now without the lid).

4.4. Optionally, add water or broth if the liquid evaporates more than it should, and then cook for an additional 3 minutes.

4.5. Taste and add salt and/or pepper if needed.

5. **Serving:**

5.1. For the best experience, let the soup cool gradually to a temperature between 145–155°F with occasional stirring before plating.

5.2. Serve with croutons or bread of any kind and a touch of thick sour cream.

*Check with a food thermometer to make sure that you have reached the desired temperature:

Fish

The USDA minimum safe internal temperature is 145°F.

Popular serving temperatures:

110 - 125°F - Rare

125 - 140°F - Medium Fair

145 - 155°F – Medium

Almond Chicken Schnitzels

4 servings

Ingredients:

2 pieces of larger chicken breasts - skinless and boneless *

Pinch of salt

Pinch of ground pepper

½ cup of all-purpose flour - adjust if needed

2 eggs

2 TBSP of milk - adjust if needed

½ cup of sliced almonds

*Each of the 2 chicken breasts will be cut into half, which will give us 4 regular portions. If you enjoy larger portions, you may want to consider using up to 1 chicken breast per person. All other ingredients can stay the same. You can also substitute chicken breasts for pork loins or chops without the bone, or a boneless veal loin.

Final touch:

Salt and pepper - ideally freshly ground

Tools:

Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups

Chef's Knife & Cutting Board

Meat Mallet

Plastic Wrap

Medium Mixing Bowl (about 3 - 4 QT)

Whisk

2 Plates

Deep Fryer with Frying Oil or 6 QT (or larger) Pot with 2 - 3 QT of Frying Oil and Thermometer for Deep Frying or Large Sauté Pan or Large Fry Pan with ¼ to ½" Layer of Frying Oil (for shallow frying)

Food Thermometer

Cooling Rack or Paper Towels

Optionally: Lemon Squeezer

Directions:

1. **Meat preparation:**

- 1.1. Ensure the chicken breasts are properly rinsed under cold water to remove surface bacteria and unwanted parts.
- 1.2. Perform a butterfly cut and then cut each chicken breast in half to reach four portions.
- 1.3. Pound over plastic wrap to approximately ¼" thickness using a meat mallet.
- 1.4. Salt and pepper from both sides.

2. **Breading station:**

- 2.1. Place ½ **cup** of all-purpose flour on a plate.
- 2.2. Add into the medium mixing bowl:

2 eggs

2 TBSP of milk

Then, whisk them thoroughly until fully combined.

- 2.3. Place ½ **cup** of sliced almonds on another plate.

3. **Bread the meat:**

Important:

Before you proceed with breading the chicken, ensure your cooking station is ready so you can start cooking immediately after breading. Meat doesn't sit well on a plate after breading and before cooking.

- 3.1. First, bread the meat in the flour on both sides.
- 3.2. Then, add the rest of the flour to the eggs and whisk thoroughly until fully combined to create a batter.

Important:

After this point, work one by one.

- 3.3. Dip each piece of chicken into the batter and allow any excess to drip off briefly.

- 3.4. Next, place the chicken in the almonds and coat evenly on both sides.
- 3.5. Repeat the same process with the remaining chicken, and then immediately proceed with cooking.

4. **Deep fry or shallow fry:**

A. Deep fry:

Note:

Work in two or more batches (based on the size of your deep fryer).

1. Preheat oil to 350°F.
2. Carefully place chicken into the fryer.
3. Fry immersed in oil until a nice golden color is reached and the chicken breasts are fully cooked (about 3 – 5 minutes from each side). *
4. When done, remove to a cooling rack and let the excessive oil drip off (about one minute).

B. Shallow fry:

Note:

Work in two pans at the same time or in batches.

1. Preheat the fry pan on medium-high heat with a layer of frying oil (between ¼ to ½”).
2. Shallow fry until a nice golden color is reached and the chicken breast are fully cooked (about 3 - 4 minutes from each side). *
3. When done, remove to a cooling rack and let the excessive oil drip off (about one minute).

5. **Final touch & Serve:**

- 5.1. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

* Check with the food thermometer to ensure you have reached the minimum recommended safe serving temperature for poultry of 165°F.

Creamy Mashed Potatoes

4 - 5 servings

Ingredients:

2 LB of potatoes - peeled and diced or sliced *

¾ cup of heavy cream - warm (can be reheated in the microwave)

Optionally: **1 clove** of garlic - peeled and grated

½ TSP of salt

¼ TSP of ground pepper - ideally freshly ground

*It really doesn't matter what size you dice potatoes for this recipe, but smaller pieces will cook faster.

Tools:

Chef's Knife & Cutting Board

Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups

Peeler

Medium Sauce Pan or Small Pot (about 4 QT)

Colander

Small Mixing Bowl (about 1 QT)

Kitchen Mixer with Whisk Attachment or Hand Mixer

Silicone Spatula

Small Hand Grater or Garlic Press (for garlic)

Optionally: Pastry Tips and Pastry Bags

Directions:

1. Potato preparation & cooking:

- 1.1. Rinse potatoes under cold water.
- 1.2. Then peel and chop potatoes.
- 1.3. Place into a medium pot and then fill the pot with water (about 1" above the level of the potatoes).
- 1.4. Cover the pot with a lid and place it on a high-heat burner. Bring to a boil.
- 1.5. Lower heat to medium and boil until fully cooked (about 12 – 15 minutes). Take one out and taste to make sure it is done.
- 1.6. Drain the water by pouring it over a colander and place it into a kitchen mixer with a whisk attachment.

2. **Final phase:**

2.1. Add into the kitchen mixer:

¾ cup of heavy cream - warm

Optionally: **1 clove** of garlic - grated

½ TSP of salt

Pinch of ground pepper

Whisk on a low speed until partially combined (about 1 minute).

2.2. Then increase speed to high and whisk until it gets nice and creamy with a fluffy consistency for at least 5 minutes.

2.3. Taste and add salt or pepper if needed.

2.4. Optionally, serve by piping out of your pastry bag with a tip.

Tip:

If parts of the ingredients stick to the side of the mixing bowl during mixing, stop the mixer and place it back into the bowl with a spatula. Then, continue mixing.

Bonus Recipe

It will not be prepared in class; please prepare it before class if you wish.

Croutons

4 - 6 servings

Ingredients:

5 slices of bread - diced *

1 TBSP of frying oil

1 TBSP of Extra Virgin Olive Oil

¼ TSP of ground pepper - ideally freshly ground

¼ TSP of salt - ideally freshly ground

*Any kind of bread can be used, although croutons work best when made from white bread or baguettes.

Tools:

Measuring Spoons & Measuring Cups

Chef's Knife & Cutting Board

Large Fry Pan or Large Stir Fry Pan - Wok or Large Sauté Pan (12" or more)

Wooden Spoon or High-Temperature Silicone Spatula

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients into a cold fry pan and thoroughly stir until combined.
2. Set aside for about 5 minutes.
3. Then place the cold pan with croutons on a medium- high heat burner and sauté with constant stirring until crispy (about 5 minutes).
4. Serve hot or cold, based on your preference.

Disclaimer:

All steps in this recipe are just suggestions, and the author and/or publisher of this recipe is not responsible for the following:

- outcome of preparation
- any health risk related to the incorrect handling of food and/or not following USDA recommendations, such as but not limited to, following the minimum safe serving temperatures
- provide health and dietary advice to readers
- safety during preparation, including incorrect handling of equipment and the equipment's suitability for food preparation, improper cooking techniques, sourcing of ingredients, and anything related to the preparation and consumption of the products of this recipe

All readers are responsible for evaluating if the recipe and its' ingredients and steps fit with their dietary restrictions and can adjust accordingly.