

Compound Broths

Hearty and Nourishing

Compensating for variable cooking times
 Pistou: a garlic and basil-flavoured soup
 Browning to intensify flavour
 Exploiting leftover meats
 How to prepare tripe for cooking
 A peppery sauce for fish soups

The first soup ever cooked was almost certainly a compound broth—a soup made with chopped ingredients that are eaten with the broth they flavour. Most compound broths include a large number of different ingredients, each of which retains its characteristic flavour and texture. In Mediterranean mixed vegetable soups (*page 42*), for example, up to a dozen soft, crisp and starchy vegetables are cooked together; in Scotch broth (*page 44*), mutton and turnips are set off by nutty grains of barley and sweet-tasting peas and a whole range of leftover meats can be combined with fresh vegetables to make a rustic broth (*opposite page and page 46*).

In fact, many compound broths are bulky, nourishing dishes that resemble main-course stews in their chief ingredients, in the herbs and aromatic vegetables that flavour them and in the poaching method by which they are cooked. But for compound broths the ingredients are cut up—usually at the start of cooking, sometimes at the end—into pieces small enough to be spooned up. And compound broths contain a higher proportion of liquid than stews. Water is the customary starting point, since it will gain plenty of flavour from the solid ingredients. For a highly flavoured soup, however, you can substitute a clear broth (*page 8*) or a velouté sauce—a broth cooked with a flour and butter roux. A velouté sauce finished with egg yolks and cream makes a smooth, rich liquid for the mussel soup demonstrated on *page 52*.

There are many classic compound broths that call for ingredients in more or less fixed proportions and combinations. In chowders, for example, fish or shellfish are combined with the sailor's rations of bacon, potatoes and onions; chicken broth and leeks are constant elements in cockie-leekie (*recipes, page 116*) and prunes are frequently added. Compound broths also offer an opportunity to experiment with different flavourings. Any cuisine you draw upon will give you fresh ideas for embellishing basic ingredients. In Mexico, for instance, tripe is garnished with red and green chili peppers to make *menudo* (*page 48*); in Philadelphia, whole peppercorns turn tripe soup into pepperpot; and in Italy, tripe soup is often finished with garlic and *prosciutto* fat (*recipe, page 124*).

Shredded cabbage is tipped into a casserole containing a chicken carcass and giblets, sliced aromatic vegetables, a bouquet garni and water for a leftover meat soup (*page 46*). After simmering, the bones and bouquet garni will be discarded; the vegetables and meat will be served in the broth.