

## Soups from Two Vegetables or from Many

When you make a soup from a mixture of vegetables, you must take into account the different cooking times they may need to reach the desired degree of doneness at the same moment. One way of controlling the result is by reducing the size of the vegetable pieces: the finer the vegetables are cut up, the faster the pieces cook, and the less significant any difference in cooking times becomes.

In the leek and potato soup shown here, for example, (*recipe, page 105*), both vegetables are sliced very thinly and tumbled into simmering salted water together. In just 15 minutes the slow-cooking potatoes and the faster-cooking leeks will both be tender, with the leeks still slightly resistant. If you prefer the leeks very soft, but the potatoes still intact, cut both vegetables into larger pieces and simmer them for about 30 minutes.

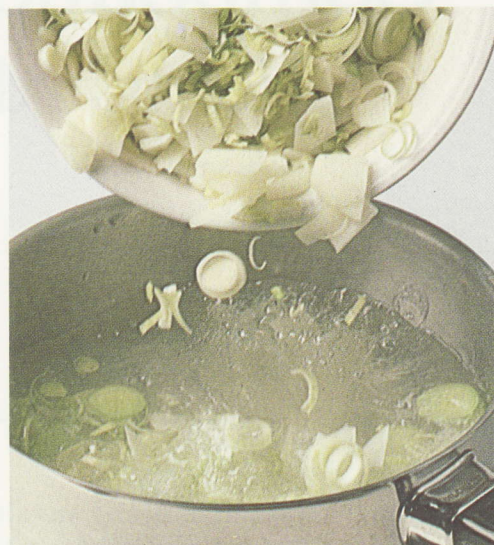
An alternative approach is to add the vegetables to the soup in stages, beginning with those that take the longest to cook. This method is especially useful for dealing with a large number of different types of vegetables, whose cooking times may differ widely.

In the soup shown opposite (*recipe, page 112*), sliced onion, leeks, carrots and potatoes are added first. They are accompanied by winter squash and fresh haricot beans. The fast-cooking squash chunks are deliberately added at this early stage so that they will partially disintegrate, contributing body to the broth. If you can only obtain dried beans, soak them overnight and pre-cook them before adding them to the broth at the start of cooking.

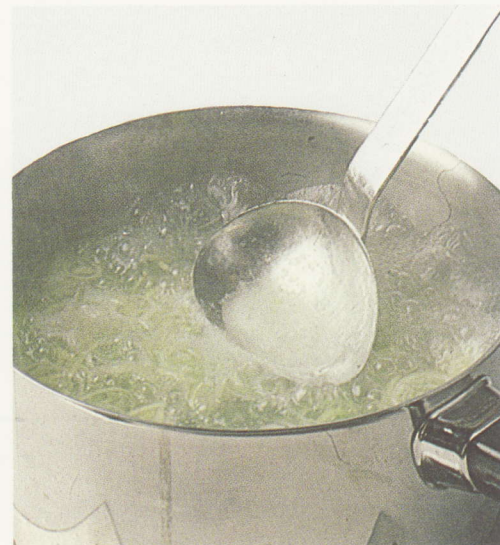
After 30 minutes of simmering, add the quick-cooking ingredients that you want to be tender but still slightly firm to the bite—here, sliced French beans, sliced courgettes and macaroni.

This soup can be served with freshly grated Parmesan cheese; or, for a silken finish, ladle on *pistou* (*box, opposite page; recipe, page 112*), a Provençal sauce fragrant with garlic, basil and olive oil.

### Cutting finely for Even Cooking



**1 Preparing the vegetables.** Wash the leeks well and trim off the base of the roots and the tough, dark green parts of the leaves. Peel the potatoes and cut them lengthwise into quarters. Cut both the leeks and the potatoes into slices the thickness of a coin. Add them to a pan of boiling, salted water (*above*).



**2 Removing the scum.** Spoon off the frothy scum that will gather on the surface of the liquid (*above*) as the soup returns to the boil. Adjust the heat to keep the liquid at a light boil and cover the pan.



**3 Serving the soup.** After about 15 to 20 minutes cooking, both the leeks and the potatoes should be tender but still intact. Ladle the soup into warmed plates (*above*) and add a chunk of butter to each serving. Season with freshly ground black pepper and garnish with a sprinkling of chopped parsley or chives. □