

A Substantial Blend of Mutton and Barley

Nourishing broths made with inexpensive meats and vegetables are a cherished tradition wherever good cooking is accompanied by thrifty housekeeping. The French, for example, poach gelatinous cuts of beef with aromatic vegetables to make pot au feu; the Scots fortify themselves with a combination of mutton, barley and vegetables known as Scotch broth (*recipe, page 115*).

Mutton is not widely available nowadays, but yearling lamb makes a good substitute in Scotch broth. Choose an inexpensive, bony cut, such as neck—used here—or shoulder. If you wish, add a veal knuckle for extra gelatine. The bones do not appear in the soup: during the latter stages of preparation, the cooked meat is removed from the bone, cut into small pieces and returned to the broth.

Start the meat in cold water. Heat it gently and spoon off the scum of albumin that forms as the liquid comes to the boil. Lamb or mutton is fatty, so skim off the liquid fat at intervals. Better still, make the soup a day in advance, leave it to cool, then spoon off the layer of fat that has congealed on the surface.

After the initial skimming, add the aromatic enrichments. Traditionally, the classic bouquet garni (*page 8*) is supplemented with fresh or dried petals of marigold, which carry a faint aroma of hay. Barley, softened by soaking overnight in cold water, is an invariable addition, and the range of suitable vegetables includes onions, carrots, leeks, turnips or swedes, and soaked dried peas.

During the two hours of cooking, the barley will swell and much of its starch will be dispersed through the liquid, thickening the broth. The long cooking will exhaust the flavour of the bouquet garni and the aromatic vegetables; discard them except for the onions and turnips or swedes. These can be puréed and returned to the broth to give it more body. Fresh garnish vegetables—carrots, peas, tomatoes, kale or cabbage—may be added towards the end of cooking.



1 Cleansing the broth. Cut the lamb—here, scrag end of neck—into even-sized pieces and trim away the fat. Put the lamb—with a veal knuckle, if you like—into a large pan. Cover with cold water and bring it slowly to the boil. Skim (*above*), add a cup of cold water and skim again as the water returns to the boil. Repeat until no more scum forms.



2 Making a bouquet garni. Prepare the flavouring herbs—here, parsley, thyme, celery leaves and dried marigold petals. To prevent the herbs from being dispersed through the liquid, place them on a square of muslin, gather the edges together to make a bag and secure with string. Quarter some onions and slice several carrots and leeks.



5 Puréeing the reserved vegetables. Add freshly shelled peas to the soup and bring it back to the boil. Sieve the reserved vegetables into the soup (*above*) to give the broth additional body. Return the meat to the soup, simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes until the peas are tender, then transfer the soup to a tureen.