

FEATURES



Rustic Portuguese-Style Potato Soup with Sausage



Rustic Portuguese-Style Potato-Kale Soup with Sausage.

By Deborah Quok

Here is a hearty, rustic soup that comes together quickly, is ideal for swapping out ingredients, and perfect for winter. Home cooks have to be flexible these days, preparing dishes based on what's at hand.

This recipe can be the start of many improvisations on its theme. I always appreciate an easy, mix-and-match recipe that's built for flexibility depending upon what might be on hand. Even a trip to the store doesn't guarantee they will have everything on the grocery list, and given wait times and lines, most of us are not store-hopping to multiple locations these days to hunt down a specific item.

This soup should fly to the top of the list for a warming and satisfying soup when the mood strikes.

Rustic Portuguese-Style Kale and Potato Soup with Sausage

Makes about 3 quarts

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package Portuguese-style Linguica, 12 ounces, halved lengthwise and sliced 1/4-inch thick; substitute any smoked sausage such as Spanish chorizo, Italian, kielbasa, etc.
- 1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, halved or quartered lengthwise then sliced 1/4-inch thick; substitute any potato you prefer, even a sweet potato
- 1 to 1-1/2 bunches kale, thinly sliced; substitute any variety of kale, collard greens, cabbage
- 1 medium onion, about 1 cup diced; Spanish, yellow or white
- 2 stalks celery, about 1 cup diced; include leaves if desired
- 4 – 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 – 2 bay leaves, fresh or dried
- 1/2 – 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- Red chile flakes to taste
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 quart low-sodium chicken broth
- Optional: Add 1 can white or garbanzo beans, rinsed and

drained; and 1 can diced tomatoes with their juices

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Use a stock pot of at least 4-quart capacity, add the sliced linguica and slowly brown over medium low heat; stirring occasionally to brown both sides as the fat begins to render. Depending on the diameter of your pot, this will take about 5 minutes. Remove the linguica with a slotted spoon or spatula to a plate and set it aside.

2. Increase the heat to medium, then add the celery and onions. Stir occasionally until they begin to soften, about 2 minutes. Add the garlic and cook another minute or so until the garlic softens. Add the sliced potatoes and mix to combine. Add the bay leaves, smoked paprika, red chile flakes and a slight amount of salt and pepper. Stir well to distribute the spices, then add the chicken stock.

3. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to barely a simmer. Cook until the potatoes are barely tender. Return the browned linguica and add the sliced kale. Cook at a slow simmer for another 10–15 minutes until kale is softened.

4. Taste and adjust seasonings accordingly. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil if desired.

Options:

- For a thicker soup, use an immersion blender and blitz a few times when the potatoes

are just tender, before adding the linguica and kale. Take care to not over blend and leave plenty of sliced potatoes to enjoy in the soup.

- Add a 15-ounce can of diced tomatoes, cooked white beans or garbanzo beans when you add the linguica and kale.

Fresh biscuits – a must for homemade soup

For light, fluffy easy-to bake biscuits, I recommend Cathead Biscuits, as adapted from Cooks Country April/May 2010 edition, Makes 6 very large biscuits

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 cups cake flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon table salt
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 1/2" pieces and softened
- 4 tablespoons pork leaf lard, cut into 1/2" pieces (Substitute vegetable shortening if you insist)
- 1 1/8 cup buttermilk

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Adjust an oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 425°F. Butter a 9" round cake pan.

2. Combine flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Rub the butter and shortening into flour mixture until it resembles coarse meal. Stir in buttermilk until combined.

3. Use a buttered 1/2 cup measuring cup or scoop to transfer 6 heaping portions of dough into prepared pan. Place 5 portions around the perimeter and 1 in the center.

4. Bake until puffed and golden brown, 20 – 25 minutes. Cool in pan for 10 minutes then transfer to a wire rack.

Notes:

- In a pinch, you can substitute the buttermilk by combining 1-1/8 cups milk with 1 tablespoon lemon juice and letting it sit for about 10 minutes until it thickens slightly.
- The dough is fairly moist. Take care to not overmix, as this will result in a denser biscuit.

For more information or to suggest a food to be reviewed, see the blog of Piedmont resident and cook Deborah Quok at Piedmont-Pantry.com.



Cathead Biscuits

CLIMATE CORNER

ESG Investment CEO calls solar “a pretty good investment”



Ben and Cortney Allen with Oakley in front of their tastefully mounted solar power control panels.

By Hope Salzer

Recently, after Ben and Cortney Allen moved into their 1905 “forever home”, they installed a 41-panel rooftop solar array with two Tesla storage batteries.

“We didn't set out to be climate activists,” said Ben, CEO of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investment specialist Parnassus Investments. “In today's low-yield investment environment, solar is a pretty good investment.”

Ben points out that the 10-year U.S. Treasury yield, hovering around 1%, offers a much lower return than his solar investment, calculated at 5% to 6%. Now the Allens power their home and their personal transportation (via an electric vehicle) with clean electricity generated from their roof.

Ben admitted that their family's electricity bill, which increased under COVID stay-at-home orders, got his attention and motivated them to explore solar power quickly. The ability to keep their electricity on during PG&E outages made the decision easier.

Ben and Cortney enjoyed working with Power On Solar (www.poweronsolar.com), the professionals who designed and installed their system. Cortney said the team was very communicative and their system has worked flawlessly. They are particularly pleased with Tesla's well-designed app, which provides real-time information on their power system's production, usage, and storage.

Initially, Cortney thought that the steep roof pitch of their Cape Cod home might be an issue for installation, but it wasn't. What was a surprise, however, was the number of external boxes and small conduits required to connect the solar panels on the roof of their home and roof of the detached garage. The conduits are connected to the storage batteries mounted inside the garage and to their home's electrical panel. Cortney worked with the

contractors to position the cases and route the conduits inconspicuously to maintain the historic appearance of their home.

Ben and Cortney are supportive of Piedmont's proposed municipal Reach Codes, which the city council is considering to help reduce Piedmont's greenhouse gas emissions. But the Allens emphasize that other motivations (costs and independence from PG&E) may be more powerful incentives for Piedmont homeowners to invest in reducing their property's environmental impact.

Nevertheless, they concede that regulations are likely necessary to educate homeowners about the speed of change now needed to address climate change, which California is experiencing firsthand with more severe wildfires and more frequent droughts.

Asked what advice they might give Piedmonters starting a carbon-neutral odyssey, Ben did not hesitate. “Go vegetarian,” he said. The Allen family is either vegetarian or vegan (with flexibility for a kid who occasionally likes pepperoni and bacon).

Ben explained that eating a plant-based diet is the easiest, most beneficial action anyone can take to reduce one's impact on the planet. “It requires no money, just avoiding one section at the grocery store,” he said.

Next, the Allens want to monitor and reduce their water use. To learn more about climate solutions, Cortney and Ben are looking forward to reading Piedmont's 2021 Readmont selection, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, by Naomi Klein. As a regular school library volunteer, Cortney has participated in Readmont nearly every year.

This year's Readmont is funded by a grant from Piedmont Connect (www.piedmontconnect.org). Learn more about the book and the Readmont events planned this year at www.piedmontconnect.org/readmont-2021.

Hope Salzer is a member of Piedmont Connect.