



Basler Mehlsuppe (Flour Soup) Version #1

My mother made this for my dad on special occasions, he loved it. I did not know the traditional story until I looked up ideas for expanding the recipe my mother used.

In Basel, on the Monday *after* Ash Wednesday, the church bells peel and the Basler Fasnacht begins. The "the three best days" of the year, start at 4 am Monday after Ash Wednesday and continue non-stop, with barely time to sleep, until 4 am on Thursday. The city almost shuts down and parades, confetti and 'Mehlsuppe' rule." Over 20,000 people participate in the festival, and those with elaborate masks and over 200 lanterns drum and piccolo their way through the streets. Usually, the masks and lanterns center on a theme heavy with irony and political satire of the previous year. The main festival website invites visitors to watch, wander the lively streets, and "absorb... this unique mixture of celebration and melancholia, and the haunting enactment of mediaeval ritual: the dance of death (Totentanz) and the masquerade (Mummenschanz)."

Bars and restaurants serve this traditional soup (along with other Fasnacht staples such as onion and cheese pies) for the 72 hours of revelry and reverie. Fresh mehlsuppe is remarkably simple and derives its rich, nutty flavor from the browning of flour.

Both recipes Submitted by Patricia Wipfli Schaffarczyk

Serves 4

Ingredients

- ½ cup flour
- 1 small onion
- 1 garlic clove
- splash of red wine (optional)
- 1 quart vegetable or beef broth
- salt, pepper fresh ground to taste
- dash of nutmeg
- grated cheese (Gruyere)

Instructions

1. Heat butter in a heavy skillet, add flour and sauté it until golden brown; add finely chopped onion and garlic.
2. While stirring continuously add carefully red wine and add broth bit by bit. Stir continuously so that there won't be any clumps.
3. Spice with salt and pepper.
4. Let soup simmer on very low heat for about 1 hour, and spice with salt and pepper if necessary.
5. You can serve the soup with grated cheese and croutons or cubes of one day old baguette bread.



Basler Mehlsuppe (Flour Soup)

Version #2

This version can also be adapted to be dairy-free and very delicious.

Ingredients

1/4 -1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter (omit butter/use olive oil/ use water)
1 pound onions, halved and very thinly sliced (4-5 medium onions)
6 cups beef or vegetable broth
3/4 cup dry red wine
1/4 tsp dried marjoram
Pinch of ground nutmeg
1/2 t. Salt
1/2 t. Pepper
Also you can use bay leaf and/or cloves to add a medieval reminder.

----Garnish---

3 ounces Sbrinz cheese (or other Swiss cheese, such Gruyere or Emmentaler), grated
1/3 cup heavy cream
1 T. finely chopped fresh parsley
1 T. finely chopped fresh chives
1/4 c. croutons or toasted bread

Instructions

1. Place the flour in a cast-iron skillet without any fat, turn the heat to medium-high, and cook the flour, shaking the pan or stirring almost constantly, until it is dark brown, about 9 minutes; as the flour darkens, ensure that it doesn't burn and turn black (just stir faster). Remove from the skillet and let cool. (Place it on a cool plate or the flour will continue to brown in the pan.)
2. In a pot, melt the butter over medium-high heat, then add the onions and cook, stirring, until translucent, about 9 minutes. (You can also use water, instead of butter for less calories). Stir in the flour and mix well. Add the beef or vegetable broth slowly, stirring the whole time. Add the red wine, bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to low and cook for 1 hour. Season with the marjoram, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Let cool.

3. Transfer the soup to a blender and run until a smooth puree is formed. Return to the pot and check the seasonings. Bring the soup to a boil over high heat. Serve with to serve with shredded cheese, and garnish with a bit cream, parsley and/or chives, and croutons.