

# Soups On

## *Soup of the Evening, Beautiful Soup*



*The Gryphon and the Mock Turtle, created by Lewis Carroll*

When I called Sean at the D&R Depot to go over the menu for the annual Dinner Auction at LeRoy House this weekend, I suggested we start dinner with one of Charlotte LeRoy's soups. "It's delicious. A very rich beef broth with a little veal and seasoned with wine and lemon zest. But folks might have trouble with the name - - mock turtle soup." The history of mock turtle soup is fascinating. In the 1700s, soup made with sea turtle was very popular but it was very expensive. If you had the money, you could buy a sea turtle and start the long laborious process of making a wonderful soup. So cooks looked for a way to make a soup that had the richness of turtle soup, but wasn't as expensive. So recipes for mock turtle soup abounded. Even Queen Victoria's chef, Frantelli had a recipe for mock

turtle soup. His recipe is over a page long, with details about preparation: "get a proper sized stockpot and after having buttered the bottom thereof, place in it four slices of raw ham, two large knuckles of veal, and an old hen partially roasted, moisten with two quarts of broth and put the stockpot on the stove-fire to boil until the broth is reduced to a glaze, then instantly slacken the heat by covering the fire with ashes and then leave the soup to color itself gradually." The base for the soup was a calf's head. (And no - - Sean is not using a calf's head to make the mock turtle soup on Saturday night!) As most cooks know, a rich stock is made by using soup bones that are simmered for hours. It is a good use of something that might be thrown away.

Charlotte LeRoy's

recipe is a little shorter than Frantelli's. It was one of eighty recipes that she copied in a little book in 1823 and brought with her to LeRoy when she and Jacob moved to town. Whether she ever made mock turtle soup, or had her cook make mock turtle soup isn't known. Charlotte's recipe:

After boiling the head cut it in pieces & reduce the liquor. The head is boiled to make the gravy with some butter and flour, then put your pieces in the browning, with a teaspoonful of pepper, one of thyme, one large onion cut fine, the rind of lemon sliced fine, a tea cup of the ketchup, half (?) of wine, cloves, mace and a little pimento, a few pieces of lean veal cut longways. After laying your layers, put as much gravy to it as to cover it, let it simmer one hour.

What is important is that almost all of the mock turtle soup recipes that I have found, include the same herbs. Many include chopped hard boiled eggs. Others include little meatballs, made of veal. Most of them include some type of ketchup - either mushroom or tomato and all of them include a red wine and lemon zest. I mention lemons, because, lemons were rare in upstate New York in the early 1800s, yet Charlotte's recipe book contains many recipes that use lemons - -for cakes, puddings, jellies, even Mrs. Wadsworth's lemon liquor.

Although I enjoy the challenge of cooking 19th century recipes over the open hearth, I have never had much interest in making mock turtle soup from scratch - although I have prepared snapping turtle a couple of times. First it's impossible to buy a scalded calf's head. I read one recipe that mentions that it's important to keep the windpipe inside the pot, because when it boils, it could siphon the broth out of the pot. Actually, I was able to find a Utube piece that showed a chef

in England making mock turtle soup with a calf's head. And then he gave away samples. Everyone thought it was great. He didn't tell them it was mock turtle soup. Actually, at one time Campbell's made mock turtle soup. Today you can buy Worthman's mock turtle soup. It is absolutely delicious. It's been made in Cincinnati since 1920.

While doing some research about mock turtle soup, I discovered that Lewis Carroll included a character, Mock Turtle in Alice in Wonderland which was published in 1865. The Queen of Hearts introduces Alice to the Gryphon who takes her to the Mock Turtle. He is very sad, and tells Alice that he used to be a real turtle in school. He sings a sorrowful song.:

Beautiful Soup, so rich and green,  
Waiting in a hot tureen!  
Who for such dainties would not stoop?  
Soup of the evening, beautiful soup!

In 1999, Alice in Wonderland was made into a movie and Gene Wilder is Mock Turtle and he sings the soulful song.

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