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Recipe: Upcycled Vegetable Puree Soup

By [Andre Daquigan, Chef](#)

The impetus for our Upcycled Vegetable Soup was to use vegetable scraps traditionally sent to the compost bin to create a delicious and nutritious pureed soup from normally discarded ingredients. After sweating onions and garlic in olive oil, our eighty-gallon steam kettles get filled with a hodgepodge of thoroughly washed celery trunks, root vegetable peels and portobello mushroom stems. We have found that the heartier ingredients like the peels and celery lend themselves to pre-roasting to intensify flavor. Stale bread rolls as well as tofu and quinoa are added to boost nutritional content and to add texture and enrich flavor.

For the home cook, the ad hoc nature of the recipe lends itself to improvisation. I would suggest that as you prep vegetables throughout a week of cooking meals, you save the edible scraps in a Ziplock bag that goes into your refrigerator. Once that bag is filled, you're ready to make your soup. The general rule is to use parts of vegetables that you would not normally eat, but that are entirely edible once cooked. Also, do not be afraid to clean out your vegetable compartment of forlorn veggies on their last legs. Have a single Yukon Gold potato or a couple of swiss chard leaves? Don't know what to do with an odd collection of fresh herbs or a handful of grape tomatoes? We give you permission to toss them in the pot!

Finally, if you have some grains, pasta or stale bread lying around, they can add textural interest, flavor and body to your soup. Seasonings and flavor profile are also completely up to you. This recipe should be used as a guideline. Feel confident in knowing that you are making something delectable out of what you might normally be throwing away.

Upcycled Vegetable Puree Soup

(Serves 4-6)

2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
3-4 garlic cloves, minced
1 Ziplock bag of odd vegetables and vegetable scraps * (celery trunks, carrot peels, mushroom stems, fresh herbs, trimmed broccoli stems, sweet potato peels, etc.)
4-6 cups water or vegetable stock
Salt and seasonings, to taste. (Dried ingredients like oregano, thyme and rosemary work well. Additionally, curry powder, soy sauce, coconut milk, vinegars or citrus add different flavor profiles.)

Optional ingredients: Stale bread, cooked rice or whole grains, pasta, tofu, quinoa

Method:

1. Heat the oil in a soup pot over a medium low flame.
2. Sweat the onions and garlic until very tender.
3. Add the vegetables and vegetable scraps along with the water or vegetable stock. Stir the ingredients well and bring the soup up to a simmer. Add a dash of salt.
4. If using uncooked grains or uncooked pasta, add them to the pot, stirring well.
5. Continue to simmer until all ingredients are very tender.
6. If using pre-cooked grains, pasta or bread, add them to the pot, stirring well. Continue to simmer until flavors blend and all ingredients are very tender.
7. Using an immersion blender, or carefully working in batches in a traditional blender, puree the soup until relatively smooth.
8. Return soup to the pot and bring to a gentle simmer. If necessary, adjust consistency with more water or stock. Add your seasonings to taste and cook until flavors blend.
9. Serve immediately or chill for later.

*Notes:

- Vegetables can be pre-roasted by tossing them with oil and a little salt and roasting them in a 375-degree oven until golden brown and tender.
- All vegetables and vegetable scraps should be fresh and thoroughly washed and trimmed of any parts that are inedible or that cannot be pureed once cooked.

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