

Dining • Dining • Dining • Dining • Dining •

Soup's On!

By Susie Iventosch

For most of January, I questioned whether or not we'd ever be reunited with that glowing red ball in the sky known as the sun, but from the weather this week, it looks like we have! Still, the cold winter days lend themselves nicely to steaming hot dinners. So to warm the inner core of our winter-weary bodies I say, "Bring on the soup!" Here are three soup recipes that are easy to make,

and lend themselves to your own creative additions.

In December, my friend Elaine McDonald treated my daughter and me to dinner at La Piazza in Orinda. It was plenty cold back then, too, and luck would have it that La Piazza featured artichoke soup as the soup du jour. I adore artichokes – they've constituted many a lunch for me over the years, but I'd never had the pleasure of dining on artichoke

soup. This soup was very light and smooth – more like bisque, and the flavor was delicate and delicious. La Piazza owner Charles Mounzer was kind enough to share his recipe, which is featured below. Two additional soup recipes for artichoke-tomato soup with bleu cheese and chicken corn chowder are both quick and easy and make a great dinner on a cold winter's night.



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La Piazza Artichoke Soup

Charles Mounzer, owner of La Piazza in Orinda, says this is their most popular soup, and it all came about quite by accident.

"We were making some changes to our menu several years ago, and decided to offer pizza with artichokes," Mounzer remembered. "We ordered in two cases of artichoke bottoms, but, we forgot to put the dish on the menu."

Not wanting to waste the large quantity of artichokes, they decided to try an artichoke soup, which has since become one of La Piazza's signature dishes.

"It was a great mistake," Mounzer added. "Everyone loves it!"

RECIPE

La Piazza Artichoke Soup

- 2 cans artichoke bottoms
- ½ cup half & half
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large russet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup chicken broth
- (or vegetable broth for vegetarians)
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a large soup pot, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onions and cook over medium-high heat until caramelized. Add the rest of the ingredients to the pot, bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to low, cooking for about 30 minutes, or until all veggies are soft. With a hand-held electric mixer, beat until smooth. If you prefer to use a food processor, that's fine, but kind of messy with all the liquid. Heat to serve.

Artichoke Heart-Tomato Soup with Bleu Cheese

(Serves six)

- 1-2 tablespoons butter
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 2 8-ounce boxes of frozen artichoke hearts
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 3 cups chicken broth
- ½ cup half & half or heavy cream
- 1/3 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, minced
- Salt and white pepper to taste

In soup pot, heat butter until bubbly, add onion and sauté over medium-high heat until soft. Add tomatoes and continue to cook for two to three minutes until tomatoes begin to soften. Add artichoke hearts, wine and chicken broth. Cover and heat until artichokes are soft. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. With a food processor fitted with a metal blade, puree soup to a smooth consistency. Return to pot and add half & half, thyme and bleu cheese. Cook over medium heat until hot. Season to taste with salt and pepper before serving.



Chicken Corn Chowder

(Serves six)

- 1 yellow onion, diced
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 2-3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 potatoes, peeled or not, your choice, and diced into quarter-inch cubes
- 1 16-ounce bag frozen yellow corn
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and finely diced (I used canned jalapeno)
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- 3-4 cups chicken broth
- (depending upon how thick or thin you like the soup)
- ½ cup half & half
- ¼ cup dry white wine or dry sherry



Louisiana Hot Sauce for serving (if the jalapenos aren't hot enough for you!)

In a large soup pot, heat 2-3 tablespoons oil, add onion, and sauté until translucent. Add chicken to pan and cook over medium-high heat until slightly browned, about five minutes. Cover and cook for another five minutes over low heat until chicken is barely cooked. Remove onion and chicken from pan and set aside. In the same pan, add another tablespoon of oil and potatoes. Cook over medium heat until potatoes are slightly browned. Add corn and continue to cook for about five minutes, stirring frequently. Return chicken and onion to pan along with fresh thyme, white pepper, jalapeno and cilantro. Add 3-4 cups chicken broth, white wine, and ½ cup half and half. Simmer for about five to ten minutes until hot. Soup can be prepared to this point until ready to use. When ready to serve, reheat over medium heat, but don't allow soup to boil. Serve piping hot.

These recipes are available on our web site.

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There are many to try out!

LAMORINDA's Restaurants		
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American		
Bistro	3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-7108
Chow Restaurant	53 Lafayette Cir, Laf	962-2469
Hungry Hunter	3201 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	938-3938
Quiznos	3651 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-0200
Ranch House	1012 School St, Mor	376-5127
Terzetto Cuisine	1419 Moraga Way, Mor	376-3832
The Cheese Steak Shop	3455 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-1234
BBQ		
Bo's Barbecue	3422 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-7133
Burger Joint		
Flippers	960 Moraga Rd, Laf	284-1567
Nation's Giant Hamburgers	400 Park, Mor	376-8888
Nation's Giant Hamburgers	76 Moraga Way, Ori	254-8888
Café		
Express Cafe	3732 Mt. Diablo Blvd # 170, Laf	283-7170
Ferrari-Lucca Delicatessens	23 Lafayette Cir, Laf	299-8040
Geppetto's caffè	87 Orinda Way, Ori	253-9894
Rising Loafer	3643 Mt. Diablo Blvd Ste B, Laf	284-8816
California Cuisine		
Gigi's	1005 Brown St., Laf	962-0882
Metro Lafayette	3524 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-4422
Shelby's	2 Theatre Sq, Ori	254-9687
Chinese		
Asia Palace Restaurant	1460 B Moraga Rd, Mor	376-0809
Chef Chao Restaurant	343 Rheem Blvd, Mor	376-1740
China Moon Restaurant	380 Park St, Mor	376-1828
The Great Wall Restaurant	3500 Golden Gate Way, Laf	284-3500
Hsiangs Mandarin Cuisine	1 Orinda Way # 1, Ori	253-9852
Lily's House	3555 Mt. Diablo Blvd #A, Laf	284-7569
Mandarin Flower	581 Moraga Rd, Mor	376-7839
Panda Express	3608 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-0288
Szechwan Chinese Restaurant	79 Orinda Way, Ori	254-2020
Uncle Yu's Szechuan	999 Oak Hill Rd, Laf	283-1688
Yan's Restaurant	3444 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-2228
Coffee Shop		
Millie's Kitchen	1018 Oak Hill Rd #A, Laf	283-2397
Squirrel's Coffee Shop	998 Moraga Rd, Laf	284-7830
Village Inn Café	290 Village Square, Ori	254-6080
Continental		
Petar's Restaurant	32 Lafayette Cir, Laf	284-7117
Vino Restaurant	3531 Plaza Way, Laf	284-1330
Duck Club Restaurant	3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-7108
Hawaiian Grill		
Lava Pit	2 Theatre Square, St. 142, Ori	253-1338
Indian		
India Palace	3740 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-5700
Swad Indian Cuisine	3602 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-9575
Italian		
Giardino	3406 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-3869
La Finestra Ristorante	100 Lafayette Cir, St. 101, Laf	284-5282
La Piazza	15 Moraga Way, Ori	253-9191
Mangia Ristorante Pizzeria	975 Moraga Rd, Laf	284-3081
Michael's	1375 Moraga Way, Mor	376-4300
Mondello's	337 Rheem Blvd, Mor	376-2533
Pizza Antica	3600 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-0500
Postino	3565 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-8700
Ristorante Amoroma	360 Park St, Mor	377-7662
Japanese		
Asia Palace Sushi Bar	1460 B Moraga Rd, Mor	376-0809
Blue Ginko	3518-A Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-9020
Kane Sushi	3474 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-9709
Niwa Restaurant	1 Camino Sobrante # 6, Ori	254-1606
Serika Restaurant	2 Theatre Sq # 118, Ori	254-7088
Tamami's Japanese Restaurant	356 Park St, Mor	376-2872
Yu Sushi	19 Moraga Way, Ori	253-8399
Jazz Dinner Club		
Joe's of Lafayette	3707 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Laf	299-8807
The Orinda House	65 Moraga Way, Ori	258-4445
Mediterranean		
Alex's	2 Theatre Sq # 105, Ori	254-5290
Nino's Bay	#2 Theater Square, Ste. 153, Ori	253-1327
Oasis Café	3594 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-8822
Per Tutti Ristorante	3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-5225
Mexican		
360 Gourmet Burrito	3655 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-1270
El Charro Mexican Dining	3339 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-2345
El Jaro Mexican Cafe	3563 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-6639
La Cocina Mexicana	23 Orinda Way, Ori	258-9987
Mucho wraps	1375-B Moraga Way, Mor	377-1203
Baja Fresh Mexican Grill		
Celia's Restaurant	3596 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-8740
El Balazo	3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-8288
Maya Mexican Grill	3518D Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-8700
Numero Uno Taqueria	74 Moraga Way, Ori	258-9049
Pizza		
Mountain Mike's Pizza	3616 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-1333
Mountain Mike's Pizza	3614 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-6363
Pennini's	504 Center St, Mor	377-6453
Round Table Pizza	1375 Moraga Rd, Mor	376-1515
Round Table Pizza	361 Rheem Blvd, Mor	376-1411
Village Pizza	3637 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-0404
Zamboni's Pizza	19 Orinda Way # Ab, Ori	254-1200
Sandwiches/Deli		
Bianca's Deli	1 Camino Sobrante # 4, Ori	254-2800
Europa Hofbrau Deli & Pub		
Gourmet Bistro Café	1480 Moraga Rd # A, Mor	376-4400
Kasper's Hot Dogs	64 Moraga Way, Ori	254-7202
Noah's Bagels	484 Center St, Mor	376-1515
Orinda Deli	103 Moraga Way, Ori	253-0766
Subway	3518 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-0716
Subway	19 F Orinda Way, Ori	254-1990
Subway	396 Park St., Mor	376-2959
Subway	3322 Mt. Diablo Blvd #B, Laf	284-2627
Seafood		
Yankee Pier	Theatre Square, Ori	258-0470
Singaporean/Malaysian		
Kopitiam	3593 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-4100
South American		
The Patio Tapas and Restaurant	3647 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-1653
Steak		
Casa Orinda	960 Moraga Road, Laf	299-6885
Tea		
Paterrie Lafayette	20 Bryant Way, Ori	254-2981
Tea Party by Appointment		
Thai		
Amarin Thai Cuisine	71 Lafayette Cir, Laf	283-2226
Baan Thai	107 Orinda Way, Ori	254-2206
Royal Siam		
Siam Orchid	3555 Mt. Diablo Blvd # B, Laf	283-8883
	99 Orinda Way, Ori	253-0989
	512 Center St, Mor	377-0420
	23 Orinda Way # F, Ori	253-1975

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