

Making pureed vegetable soup

Most vegetable soups follow five basic steps. These are the steps I used when making celery root soup, but they'll work equally well with cauliflower, broccoli, carrot, just about any vegetable you have on hand. Don't worry too much about proportions, but if you use approximately half as much mirepoix as main vegetable, you should be good to go.

1. Gently saute a mix of onions, celery and carrots (called mirepoix) in butter or oil; shallots, leeks and garlic work well, too. Make sure to cut your mirepoix as small/thin as possible. Everything will be blended together in the end, but this will quicken cooking time. Cook until onions/shallots are translucent and other vegetables soften, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

2. Add the main vegetable (again, cut as small as possible) and saute gently with the mirepoix to blend flavors. Season with salt and pepper. (Note: You can dump these in at the beginning as well, but sometimes the pot gets crowded. It's important to saute the mirepoix thoroughly to maximize flavor in the resulting soup.)

3. Cover vegetables with chicken stock, vegetable stock, or beef stock. Make your own or buy the lowest-sodium version possible so you can control the seasoning yourself.

4. Simmer until vegetables are super soft. My professional rule of thumb is that the main vegetable should easily mush when scraped against the pot with a spoon.

5. Puree the soup in batches in a blender, adding milk, cream or a couple tablespoons of alcohol, if desired. Pass through a sieve, season to taste, and serve. A drizzle of truffle oil never hurt anyone.

— *Sophie Brickman*