

Sopa de Fideo

(Vermicelli Soup)

SERVES 4-6

Fideo (or fideos) noodles are very thin and short enough to fit into a soup spoon. Vermicelli pasta may be substituted. (This and all other recipes in this story come from Josefina Velázquez de León's cookbooks.)

1 ripe tomato, cored and halved crosswise
1 medium white onion, peeled and chopped
1 clove garlic, peeled
2 tbsp. lard
1 cup 1" fideo noodles (see page 103)
or vermicelli (broken into pieces
approximately 1" in length)
8 cups chicken stock
1 sprig fresh parsley
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 oz. queso fresco or dried pressed
farmers' cheese, crumbled (see page 103)

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Roast tomatoes, cut side up, in a small roasting pan in oven until lightly browned, about 30 minutes. Transfer tomatoes to a blender. Add onions and garlic and purée until mixture is a smooth loose paste. Strain through a fine sieve, discarding the liquid, and set tomato mixture aside.

2. Heat lard in a heavy medium pot over medium-high heat. Add noodles and fry, stirring frequently, until golden, about 1 minute. Transfer noodles with a slotted spoon to a dish and set aside.

3. Carefully add tomato mixture to remaining lard in pot and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until thickened, about 1 minute. Stir in toasted noodles, stock, and parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer soup for 15-20 minutes. Adjust seasonings.

4. Remove and discard parsley sprig from pot. Serve soup garnished with crumbled cheese, if you like.