

FAMOUS MUSHROOM SOUP

from Brian C. Luscher

(chef/owner, The Grape restaurant)

“I have met people from all over,” Luscher says. “When they find out I am the owner of The Grape, I am most often asked ‘Do you still have the mushroom soup?’ I always reply, ‘Oh yeah! We could never take it off the menu.’”

What he doesn’t tell them is this recipe has been passed down through the restaurant “family” over 37 years.

Chef Michael Blackwell, whose first stint at The Grape was from 1973-1977, brought quiche and a French leaning to the restaurant’s cuisine. He perfected the mushroom soup recipe and taught it to his cooks, one of whom was Hector Cruz. Some 10 years later, Cruz taught the recipe to his younger brother, Juan, a dishwasher at the time. Twelve years later, Juan Cruz passed it on to the youngest Cruz brother, Chuy, also a dishwasher at the time. Chuy Cruz is now the morning sous chef at The Grape.

He’s teaching the recipe to another cook there.

INGREDIENTS

- 🍴 2½ lbs button mushrooms, washed and chopped (*it’s easy to do in a food processor*)
- 🍴 1 large onion, diced small
- 🍴 2 cloves garlic, crushed and minced
- 🍴 1 dry bay leaf
- 🍴 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 🍴 ¼ c dry sherry (*optional*)
- 🍴 ½ lb unsalted butter (2 sticks)
- 🍴 1 c all-purpose flour
- 🍴 3 qt beef broth or stock, or the equivalent made with beef bouillon cubes
- 🍴 2 c heavy cream
- 🍴 ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 🍴 salt and pepper to taste

- In a heavy-bottomed, 6-8 quart stock or soup pot, melt the butter over medium low heat. Add the onion, garlic, bay leaf and thyme, and cook until onion is translucent.
- Add the chopped mushrooms, and cook until most of the water comes out of them. Add the sherry, if you like, and reduce by half.
- Add the flour, and stir well to avoid lumps (if you do get some, it’s OK — they can be puréed out later).
- Slowly whisk in the broth or stock, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
- Continue to stir the soup at this point, or the bottom may scorch. When the soup comes to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 20 minutes uncovered, stirring occasionally.
- Finish by adding the heavy cream and nutmeg, and add salt and pepper to taste. Remove the thyme and bay leaf, and purée the soup either in a blender or with a hand-held blender.

Notes: *Makes 16 servings; the recipe may easily be cut in half, but it is worth making the whole batch because it freezes well.* 🍴