

KITCHEN AFFAIRS

for the serious cook

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CHICKEN SOUP with KNAIDLACH (a.k.a. Matzoh Ball soup)

FOR THE SOUP:

1 (fat) chicken
3 or 4 ribs celery, leaves on
1 medium onion, quartered
2 bay leaves
1/2 bunch fresh parsley, with stems
8 to 10 whole black peppercorns
3 or 4 carrots, with or without tops

Wash and clean the chicken well. Wash the vegetables, and if you wish a light colored soup, discard the outer skin from the onion. The stems and leaves will add flavor to the soup.

Put all the ingredients in a large *schissel* (stock pot) and put it on the stove. Fill it with enough fresh water to cover all the ingredients. Bring the water to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer the soup until the chicken falls apart when lifted by one leg. Remove the chicken from the pot and the large vegetables. The chicken meat can be removed from the bones and used for chicken salad, or another dish of your choice. Some will leave small slivers of chicken in this soup, but that is not traditional. Strain the soup, reserving the carrots (without the tops). Cut the carrots into 2-to 3-inch lengths. These are used, one per bowl, to garnish the soup. This soup is best if made ahead and refrigerated overnight. The next day you should remove most of the fat from the top of the pot, leaving just a little for flavor. Reheat the soup and serve with knaidlach (matzoh balls), or kreplach (Jewish beef "ravioli"), noodles, rice, or fresh challah. Each bowl may be garnished with a piece of carrot and a little parsley, if you wish.

FOR THE MATZOH BALLS: (Makes 8 to 10)

2 TableSpoons schmaltz (rendered chicken fat), or oil
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup matzoh meal*
1 teaspoon salt (optional)
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
4 TableSpoons homemade chicken soup (or less, for firmer balls)

Beat the eggs and schmaltz together. Add the matzoh meal, salt and pepper. Beat well. Add the stock. Cover and refrigerate in a bowl for 20 minutes. Bring a large pot of water to boil. Reduce the heat, and with wet hands, form balls and gently drop them into the simmering water. Cover the pot and cook for 20 minutes. Transfer these to the hot soup and serve when ready.

*Matzoh meal (also spelled matzah or matzo) is ground from matzohs (or matzoh "crackers"). This is the unleavened bread eaten for the Passover festival. It contains only flour and water and is not allowed to rise at all.