

Soup's On Deck

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

Among cruising enthusiasts, Viking River and Expedition Cruises win high marks for the quality and presentation of their food. Recent Viking Eistla passengers exploring the December Christmas Markets were particularly enthusiastic about the soups coming out of the river cruise ship's kitchen. Viking Eistla's executive chef and sous chef, in fact, think of their soups as a "daily surprise" that brings a warm taste of home to the journey between Amsterdam and Basel.



ANTONI SHKRAKA STUDIO

French Onion, Cheese Soup, and German Wedding Soup (*Hochzeitssupp* — a clear beef broth with rice and a mix of vegetables) are tied in with specific destinations along the Rhine route. Others such as Red Curry Lentil, Italian White Bean soup, and Carrot-Orange with pomegranate seeds reflect how global big cities and small communities in Europe have become.

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD
Cruise ship in Germany;
Chanterelles.

According to Viking Eistla's executive chef, creating a good soup provides an important opportunity to connect with passengers. He points out that after every cruise, guests are asked to fill out questionnaires and says that there is never a week in which the team did not get positive comments about the soups. Out of 180 guests on a river cruise, 140 portions are served at lunch and dinner meals, and up to 80 percent of the passengers point to the soup as a highlight. In turn, the culinary team gets a better idea of what they like and don't like based on their comments. In colder climates, like that of the Rhine for a good part of the year, passengers gravitate toward the soups. On the other hand, passengers on Mediterranean cruises who want to eat lighter in warmer weather may want a good soup to balance their salad.

Although the Viking Eistla's sous chef has worked in Viking kitchens for a little over a year, he has already earned recognition from passengers as a "master of soups" and one of the best soup makers within the cruise line among his peers. He is now well versed in regional cuisines along the Rhine, from Amsterdam to Basel. He insists the mastery of beef, chicken, and vegetarian soup bases is ultimately what allows him — and anybody enjoying the art of soup making at home — to create a variety of finished soups.

The sous chef credits his mother not only for his work ethic but also for giving customers a sense of wellbeing through well crafted recipes. He explains that after his mother learned a variety of cooking skills on earlier jobs, she opened a small restaurant specializing in local delicacies that attracted a dedicated following. This inspired him to follow her into the family business, impressed that her food could provide flavour and comfort to people beyond his immediate family. He also learned the importance of engaging directly with diners, to create a deeper appreciation for the craft of cooking.

All the broths and stocks used for Viking's daily soup specials are made fresh on board from scratch. It is a process that cannot be rushed, and includes simmering the stock overnight and having members of the kitchen team taste what's in progress. If it isn't up to the agreed standards, feedback will be shared on what to add or change.»



VIKING CRUISES

SERVES 4

Cream of Chanterelle Soup with Arugula

Olive Oil
2 tsp

Onion finely chopped,
1 Tbs

Garlic
minced, ½ tsp

Fresh Chanterelle Mushrooms
8 oz, sliced

All-Purpose Flour 1 tsp,
for dusting

White Wine
2 Tbs

Chicken Broth
3 ½ cups

Heavy Cream
1 cup


Baby Arugula
4 oz

Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper
to taste

Fresh Chives
chopped, 1 tsp

- 1 IN** a medium saucepan, heat the olive oil and sauté onion and garlic until transparent, about 4 minutes.
- 2 ADD** the chanterelles; sauté an additional 3 minutes.
- 3 SPRINKLE** in the flour; add the white wine and chicken stock, stirring to combine; simmer 30 minutes. Stir in the heavy cream; simmer another 5 minutes.
- 4 ADD** the arugula and gently fold in, cooking until just wilted.
- 5 SEASON** with the salt and pepper and serve in pre-warmed bowls garnished with the chives.

«Every year, at the beginning of each cruise season, the culinary staff undergoes two or three training programs to learn new recipes, standards, and techniques that result in a dynamic food program. The chef and sous chef credit this to creating a work environment where the culinary crew members can grow and create a family dynamic that rubs off on the guests.

“When people ask about our secret ingredient, we tell them a bit of love is what makes our soups special,” says the sous. “In fact, anything we bake or cook is made from the heart, which is much better than relying upon a recipe alone.” 



SERVES 4

Dutch Cheese Soup

Vegetable Oil
¼ cup

Onions
diced, ½ cup

Cauliflower diced,
1 cup

Carrots 2 medium,
cut into ½" cubes

Potatoes 2 medium,
cut into ½" cubes

**Low Sodium
Chicken Broth**
4 cups

Butter 2 Tbs

Canadian Bacon
4 oz, diced

Gouda Cheese 5 oz,
thinly sliced

**Salt and Freshly
Ground Black
Pepper** to taste

**Sourdough
Baguette**
8 x ½" slices

- PLACE** the oil in a 1 ½-quart saucepan over medium-high heat.
- ADD** the onion and sauté until soft.
- ADD** the cauliflower, carrots and potatoes; sauté for 5 minutes.
- STIR** in the chicken broth and bring to a simmer.
- MEANWHILE**, heat the butter in a small skillet; add the bacon and sauté until lightly browned.
- ADD** the bacon to the soup, reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, until the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.
- POUR** the soup into 4 individual ovenproof bowls, topping each with 2 bread slices and one quarter of the cheese.
- PLACE** under the broiler until cheese is bubbly and serve immediately.



SERVES 5

Roasted Carrot Soup

Carrots 300 g,
peeled and cut
into 1" chunks

Butter 2 tsp,
melted

**Salt and Freshly
Ground Black
Pepper** to taste

**Chicken or
Vegetable
Stock** 2 cups

**Low Fat Plain
Greek Yogurt**
3 Tbs

- PREHEAT** the oven to 350°F.
- PLACE** the carrots on baking sheet, drizzle with butter, sprinkle with salt and pepper, toss to coat.
- ROAST** for 25 minutes, let cool for 5 minutes, then blend with chicken or vegetable stock until smooth, adding more stock if necessary.
- POUR** into a saucepan and bring just to a simmer.
- TO** serve, ladle the hot soup into bowls, drizzle with yogurt and sprinkle with dukkah.

SERVES 5

Dukkah

Pistachios 2 oz

**Sesame Seeds,
Coriander
Seeds, Cumin
Seeds** 1 Tbs each

Fennel Seeds
1 Tbs

**Black
Peppercorns**
2-4, to taste

- TOAST** the pistachios in dry skillet over medium-low heat for 5-6 minutes. Transfer to a plate; cool.
- TOAST** the sesame, coriander, cumin, fennel and peppercorns for 1-2 minutes and cool.
- COARSELY** grind all ingredients with mortar and pestle or food processor.

ELYSE GLICKMAN is a freelance writer and regular contributor to **TASTE&TRAVEL** based in Los Angeles.

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