

# VEG – simple, stylish and seasonal vegetarian cooking

Catherine Mason

Pauntley  
Press

Published by Pauntley Press  
An imprint of Ford & Mason Ltd  
Compton House, Redmarley, Gloucestershire, GL19 3JB, UK

[www.pauntley-press.co.uk](http://www.pauntley-press.co.uk)

Copyright © 2001 Catherine Mason.

The right of Catherine Mason to be identified as Author of this Work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Ford & Mason Ltd.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from The British Library

ISBN: 0 9534897 2 8

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Cedar Press, Bristol

Cover by creativenatives, Bristol

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

VEG is available from Pauntley Press ([www.pauntley-press.co.uk](http://www.pauntley-press.co.uk))

# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	11
INTRODUCTION	13
STARTERS AND SOUPS	21
Purée of broad beans with fresh tarragon <b>VL</b>	22
Melitzanosalata – Greek aubergine dip	23
Mushrooms stuffed with Roquefort and walnuts	24
Field mushrooms stuffed with hazelnuts and Torta di Dolcelatte	25
Sushi rolls <b>VL</b>	26
Fresh tomato and pepper salsa <b>VL</b>	28
Tomato tartlets with crisp Parmesan topping	29
Mushroom and aubergine wontons	30
Soups – some ground rules for improvisation	32
Spiced cream of pumpkin soup with Seville orange <b>V</b>	33
Lovage soup	34
Cream of cauliflower soup with walnuts <b>V</b>	35
Cauliflower and potato soup with Indian spices <b>V</b>	36
Carrot and coriander soup <b>V</b>	37
Celery and celeriac soup with fennel <b>V</b>	38
Cream of Jerusalem artichoke soup	39
Simple winter vegetable soup <b>V</b>	40
Spinach and potato soup with Indian spices <b>V</b>	41
Cream of tomato soup with basil	42
Plain and herb dumplings for soups and stews <b>V</b>	43
SALADS	45
Garden leaf and herb salad with balsamic vinaigrette <b>VL</b>	46
Artichoke, egg and tomato salad with pesto marinade	48
Watercress, avocado and walnut salad <b>V</b>	49
Summer bean salad <b>VL</b>	50
Yellow courgette and rocket salad <b>VL</b>	51

Warm flageolet salad with fresh herbs <b>VL</b> . . . . .	52
Pink grapefruit and watercress salad <b>VL</b> . . . . .	53
Guacamole <b>V</b> . . . . .	54
Pasta salad with green beans and tomatoes . . . . .	55
Pink beetroot salad with roasted walnuts and walnut vinaigrette <b>VL</b> . . . . .	56
Potato salad with chives and crème fraîche . . . . .	57
Potato salad with a parsley lemon dressing . . . . .	58
Warm lentil and mint salad <b>VL</b> . . . . .	59

## MAIN COURSES

61

### EGG DISHES

Soufflé of chard and tomato . . . . .	62
Soufflé of small pumpkins, baked in their skins . . . . .	64
Sorrel soufflé . . . . .	65
Terrine of green and yellow beans with tomato . . . . .	66
Courgette and potato frittata . . . . .	67
Pumpkin and sweetcorn frittata . . . . .	68

### PASTA

Life without pasta? . . . . .	69
Fresh egg pasta . . . . .	70
Herb pasta . . . . .	71
Spinach pasta . . . . .	72
Saffron pasta . . . . .	72
Pasta with mushrooms, walnuts and avocado . . . . .	73
Pasta with Savoy cabbage, Dolcelatte and roasted walnuts . . . . .	74
Fusilli with courgettes, basil and pine kernels . . . . .	75
Dolcelatte, leek and lovage sauce for pasta . . . . .	76
Leeks and fusilli with pesto and white wine . . . . .	77
Pasta with mushrooms and rocket . . . . .	78
Red pepper and almond sauce for pasta . . . . .	79
Saffron ravioli filled with a purée of petits pois . . . . .	80
Fresh parsley lasagne layered with roast pumpkin and chard . . . . .	82

### BEANS, LENTILS AND NUTS

Slow-cooked Greek beans with tomatoes, herbs and red wine <b>VL</b> . . . . .	84
Lentils cooked in red wine with mint <b>VL</b> . . . . .	86
Couscous with saffron and butter beans <b>VL</b> . . . . .	87
Sweet-potato pie with Puy lentils in a wine sauce <b>V</b> . . . . .	88
Terrine of cashews, almonds and apples . . . . .	90
Refritos <b>VL</b> . . . . .	92

### RICE AND OTHER GRAINS

Risotto . . . . .	93
Leek and mushroom risotto . . . . .	95
Mushroom risotto with Marsala . . . . .	96
Pumpkin risotto with saffron . . . . .	98
Quinoa with braised Mediterranean vegetables, herbs and goat's cheese . . . . .	100

Risotto of leeks, petits pois and pine kernels . . . . .	102
Herb couscous <b>VL</b> . . . . .	103
Tarragon couscous with roasted pumpkin <b>VL</b> . . . . .	104
Baked spiced polenta with a fresh tomato sauce . . . . .	105
Baked polenta layered with three sauces . . . . .	106
Baked rosemary polenta with a crisp red onion topping . . . . .	108
<b>MAINLY VEGETABLES</b>	
Aubergines and red onions roasted with Marsala <b>VL</b> . . . . .	109
Roasted celeriac with shallots, walnuts and soft goat's cheese . . . . .	110
Pattypan squash filled with walnuts and Roquefort . . . . .	111
Roasted baby aubergines with leeks and mushrooms <b>VL</b> . . . . .	112
Roasted Mediterranean vegetables with herbs and goat's cheese . . . . .	113
Onion and mushroom ragoût with Quorn <b>L</b> . . . . .	114
Egg and spinach pizza . . . . .	116
Calzone filled with Cavolo Nero, sun-dried tomatoes and herbs . . . . .	118
Buckwheat pancakes filled with spinach and sun-dried tomatoes . . . . .	120
Courgette ribbon noodles <b>VL</b> . . . . .	123
Sauté of mixed summer squash <b>L</b> . . . . .	124
Tomato and pepper ragoût with grilled goat's cheese . . . . .	125
Thai green curry <b>V</b> . . . . .	126
Winter vegetable stew <b>VL</b> . . . . .	127
<b>VEGETABLE ACCOMPANIMENTS AND SIDE DISHES</b>	
Jerusalem artichoke and red onion sauté <b>VL</b> . . . . .	129
Celeriac gratin with Indian spices <b>VL</b> . . . . .	130
Celeriac mash with potatoes, celery and lovage <b>VL</b> . . . . .	131
Braised chicory with shallots, mustard and dill . . . . .	132
Clay-baked new potatoes with garlic and herbs <b>VL</b> . . . . .	133
Mashed potatoes with pesto, Parmesan and pine kernels . . . . .	134
Potato gratin with garlic and rosemary <b>VL</b> . . . . .	135
Red onions with Seville orange and Marsala <b>VL</b> . . . . .	136
Spiced red cabbage with Marsala and apples <b>VL</b> . . . . .	137
Roasted mushrooms and shallots with mustard and red wine <b>VL</b> . . . . .	138
Swede and parsnip mash with fresh herbs <b>VL</b> . . . . .	139
<b>DESSERTS</b>	
Banoffi pie . . . . .	141
Chestnut syllabub . . . . .	142
Chocolate tofu mousse <b>V</b> . . . . .	144
Baked rhubarb and stem ginger pudding . . . . .	145
Hazelnut meringues . . . . .	146
Brandy mocha trifle . . . . .	147
Ices . . . . .	148
Vodka lemon sorbet <b>VL</b> . . . . .	150
	151

Seville orange sorbet <b>VL</b> . . . . .	152
Strawberry sorbet <b>VL</b> . . . . .	153
Strawberry yogurt ice . . . . .	154

<b>BAKING</b> . . . . .	155
Overnight bread – bread machine recipe <b>V</b> . . . . .	157
Olive and tomato focaccia <b>V</b> . . . . .	158
Saffron cardamom bread with dates and pecans <b>V</b> . . . . .	160
Crisp butter shortcrust pastry . . . . .	162
Almond apple cake . . . . .	163
French chocolate cake with ground almonds . . . . .	164
Chocolate biscuit cake . . . . .	166
Spelt cookies with dates and pecans . . . . .	167
Treacle flapjack . . . . .	168
Coconut caramel bars . . . . .	169

<b>BREAKFASTS</b> . . . . .	171
Breakfast pancakes – U.S. style . . . . .	172
Oatmeal pancakes . . . . .	173
English apple and blackberry pancake topping <b>VL</b> . . . . .	174
Walnut French toast . . . . .	175
Fried banana sandwich . . . . .	176
Fried chocolate sandwich . . . . .	177
Coconut granola . . . . .	178
Breakfast bulgar with cardamom and sultanas <b>L</b> . . . . .	179
Rhubarb and stem ginger compôte <b>VL</b> . . . . .	180
Citrus and passion-fruit salad <b>VL</b> . . . . .	181

<b>SAUCES</b> . . . . .	183
Roux sauce – basic method . . . . .	184
Cheese sauce . . . . .	185
Onion sauce with Marsala <b>V</b> . . . . .	186
Mushroom and herb sauce . . . . .	187
Garlic mushroom sauce . . . . .	188
Oriental peanut and sesame sauce <b>V</b> . . . . .	189
Sweet chilli dipping sauce <b>VL</b> . . . . .	190
Pesto . . . . .	191
Tomato coulis <b>VL</b> . . . . .	192
Summer tomato sauce with basil and cream . . . . .	193
Red onion and redcurrant relish <b>VL</b> . . . . .	194

<b>SNACKS, SANDWICHES AND TREATS</b> . . . . .	195
Herb pancakes . . . . .	196
Pesto bread . . . . .	198

Avocado and walnut toast with cherry tomatoes . . . . .	198
Summer sandwich with walnuts, baby broad beans and Emmental cheese . .	199
Torta di Dolcelatte, pear and macadamia sandwich . . . . .	200
Tomato open sandwich with basil and balsamic vinegar <b>L</b> . . . . .	200
Chocolate hazelnut spread <b>V</b> . . . . .	201
White chocolate cardamom truffles . . . . .	202
<b>FREEZER AND PANTRY</b>	203
Some useful things to freeze . . . . .	204
Herb butters . . . . .	205
Garlic butter with parsley . . . . .	206
Lemon parsley butter . . . . .	206
Thai green curry paste <b>VL</b> . . . . .	207
Vegetable stock <b>VL</b> . . . . .	208
Bramble jelly <b>VL</b> . . . . .	209

## PURÉE OF BROAD BEANS WITH FRESH TARRAGON

This pale green creamy purée – a dip for crisp, raw vegetables and bread sticks – is lovely as part of a mixed *hors d'œuvre*. Serve with one or two other dips – perhaps *Melitzanosalata* (see opposite) and *Fresh tomato and pepper salsa* (page 28) – and you have a nice, uncomplicated opener for a warm-weather dinner.

about 900 g (2 lb) fresh broad beans, prepared,  
or 300 g (10 oz) frozen  
420 ml (15 fl oz) vegetable stock  
1 clove of garlic, crushed  
3 teaspoons lemon juice  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh or frozen tarragon  
½ level teaspoon sugar  
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Simmer the beans in the vegetable stock until tender (3–10 minutes, depending on their age and size). Drain them, but save the stock. Place all the ingredients in a food processor and whiz until smooth, adding just enough of the stock to thin the purée to a manageable consistency. Taste, and adjust the seasoning as necessary. Although it can be chilled, the purée is rather good served freshly-made and lukewarm.

SERVES 4 WITH CRUDITÉS

## MELITZANOSALATA – GREEK AUBERGINE DIP

This is a wonderfully cool and refreshing dip for a summer's day. It is a good vehicle for crudités of raw vegetables, or would be equally at home with chunks of fresh baguette and a dish of fat, glossy Kalamata olives. The addition of a salad of luscious, sun-ripened tomatoes and salty, white feta cheese drizzled with green olive oil, and a bottle of ice-cold retsina would make for my perfect hot-weather lunch.

**200 g (7 oz) full fat Greek cow's yogurt**

**1 large or 2 medium aubergines**

**1 clove garlic, crushed**

**2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**

**2 tablespoons white wine vinegar**

**salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Oven temperature: 180°C (350°F, gas 4) – adjust for fan ovens

This dip should be quite solid and not at all watery, so the yogurt needs to be strained. Line a small colander or sieve either with a double layer of butter muslin or about four thicknesses of kitchen roll. Stand it over a bowl to catch any liquid that runs off. Pour off any water then tip the yogurt into the lined colander. Cover, and leave in the fridge for several hours, preferably overnight.

The aubergines are first baked until the flesh is soft. If they are reasonably small they could be grilled over a barbecue, after the heat has died down slightly, which would give them a good smoky flavour, but they are perfectly acceptable cooked in a normal domestic oven.

Whichever method you use, wash the aubergines and prick them all over with a fork, to prevent explosions. Assuming that you are using a normal domestic oven, heat it to a moderate temperature – around 180°C (350°F, gas 4), although the exact temperature is not critical – and bake the aubergines uncovered in a baking dish until they are very soft to the prod of a finger or blunt knife. This can take up to 1 hour, depending on their size. For smaller aubergines, start checking after 40 minutes.

Set aside the cooked aubergines until they are cool enough to handle, then cut them in half and scoop out the flesh. Put the flesh and all the other ingredients except the yogurt into a food processor and whiz until smooth. Scrape down any lumpy bits from the side of the bowl and whiz again, if necessary. Fold the strained yogurt gently into the aubergine mixture. Don't process after the yogurt has been added as it damages the structure. Taste, and adjust the seasoning, adding extra vinegar if necessary. Chill thoroughly before serving.

MAKES ABOUT 300 ML (10 FL OZ)

## MUSHROOMS STUFFED WITH ROQUEFORT AND WALNUTS

This recipe is lovely made with smaller field mushrooms in the autumn, if you know where to find them and can identify them safely. It's also fine using cultivated mushrooms with caps of about 5–6 cm (2 inch) diameter. Whether wild or tame, use the freshest mushrooms you can find – it really makes a difference in this recipe.

**8–12 mushrooms, depending on size**  
**1 clove garlic, crushed**  
**100 g (3½ oz) Roquefort cheese**  
**1 medium slice wholemeal bread**  
**black pepper, freshly ground**  
**1 tablespoon of finely chopped fresh parsley**  
**60 g (2 oz) chopped walnuts**  
**a little butter**  
**lemon wedges, to serve**

Heat the oven to its hottest setting – around 250°C (475°F, gas 9).

Clean the mushrooms and remove the stalks. Put the stalks, garlic, cheese, bread, pepper and parsley in the food processor and whiz briefly. Stir in the walnuts by hand, to keep their texture.

Pile this mixture into the mushroom caps and set them on a baking tray that has been lightly buttered. If you have some of those little individual cast iron baking dishes, by all means use them.

Bake the mushrooms uncovered for about 8 minutes, and serve while they are still sizzling, with a wedge of lemon and some decent bread.

SERVES 4

## FIELD MUSHROOMS STUFFED WITH HAZELNUTS AND TORTA DI DOLCELATTE

Torta di Dolcelatte is a luscious Italian cheese comprising thin, alternating layers of blue-veined Dolcelatte interleaved with creamy Mascarpone. Always well-flavoured but never astringent, it is usually easy to find, but if you have problems, just mix equal quantities of Mascarpone (or other cream cheese) with Dolcelatte.

If you can't get field mushrooms this dish is fine made with some of the larger flat mushrooms to be had in the shops.

**4 huge or 8 medium-sized field mushrooms**  
**30 g (1 oz) butter**  
**1 tablespoon olive oil**  
**4 tablespoons finely-chopped shallots**  
**2 garlic cloves, crushed**  
**110 g (4 oz) Torta di Dolcelatte cheese**  
**4 teaspoons lemon juice**  
**60 g (2 oz) hazelnuts, roasted and coarsely chopped**

Oven temperature: 200°C (400°F, gas 6) – adjust for fan ovens

Clean and de-stalk the mushrooms. If you can get away with just wiping them with a damp cloth, so much the better.

Trim the stalks and chop them finely.

Melt the butter and oil together in a small pan and brush a little of the mixture over the mushroom caps. Place the mushrooms on an oven-proof baking tray or dish, and set on one side.

Sauté the shallots, mushroom stalks and garlic in the remaining oil and butter mixture, over a moderate heat until soft. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in all the remaining ingredients with a fork.

Pile the filling on the mushrooms, spreading it out so the entire surface is covered.

Bake, uncovered, for about 10 minutes in the pre-heated oven.

SERVES 4

## SUSHI ROLLS

Sushi rolls look impressive, are very low in fat and are really quite easy to make. So long as you stick to vegetable-only fillings as given here, they are also vegan. A special bamboo rolling mat is a help but not essential – the same effect can be achieved with a clean tea-towel folded in half, or a large linen napkin.

Although it's OK to make them in advance, don't serve sushi straight from the fridge. They need to be at room temperature, as ice-cold sticky rice is clammy and unappealing.

### SUSHI ROLLS

**250 g (9 oz) sushi rice (short-grained white rice)**

**400 ml (14 fl oz) water**

**1½ level teaspoons salt**

**40 g (1½ oz) sugar**

**3 tablespoons Japanese rice vinegar**

**3 sheets sushi nori (Japanese culinary seaweed)**

**filling: for suggestions see below**

### DIPPING SAUCE

**3 tablespoons Japanese rice vinegar**

**3 tablespoons shoyu or tamari**

**1 level teaspoon prepared wasabi (Japanese horseradish) paste**

**2 level teaspoons sugar**

**2 tablespoons cold water**

### TO SERVE

**a small pack of sliced pickled ginger (optional but nice)**

Cook the rice with the water and salt at a gentle simmer (lowest possible heat) in a covered pan for 20 minutes. Take it off the heat and let it stand for 10 minutes more with the lid on the pan, by which time all the water should have been absorbed. Stir in the sugar and rice vinegar gently using a fork.

Take a nori sheet and place it on the bamboo mat, napkin or whatever you are using. Spread one third of the rice evenly over the nori (pay particular attention to the sides), leaving a 2 cm (1 inch) strip of nori uncovered at the end furthest away from you, for sealing purposes. With the back of a teaspoon, make a shallow linear depression in the rice, parallel to the 'sealing strip', but about one third of the way in from the opposite end. Arrange your chosen filling evenly along this depression, then, using the mat or napkin to support it, roll up the nori, working away from yourself, as tightly and evenly as you can. Dampen the bare strip of nori with a little cold water to get a good seal.

Keep the rolls intact until just before serving. They can be wrapped in cling-film and refrigerated for up to 48 hours, if necessary. Cut into 2 cm (1 inch) slices with a very sharp knife, moistened with cold water. You'll probably need to clean the knife between slices. Discard the ragged end slices.

#### THE DIPPING SAUCE

Combine the ingredients for the dipping sauce thoroughly. Make sure the wasabi paste is well mixed in as it's incredibly hot if you accidentally get a lump!

Arrange the sushi slices on a large platter but serve individual portions of pickled ginger and dipping sauce in tiny bowls or ramekins.

SERVES 6

#### SUGGESTED FILLINGS

When steaming vegetables to use as sushi filling cook them for the absolute minimum time needed. They should just have the raw edge taken off, but still be a very long way from soggy. The times given below are my best estimates for individual vegetables, but you should test as you go, since it's very easy to over-cook them.

- Long batons of steamed carrot (3 minutes) and green courgettes (2 minutes, use pieces with some skin attached) laid side by side to give a two-colour effect when the roll is sliced.
- Long strips of steamed red, green and yellow pepper (2 minutes), laid side by side, for a three-colour effect.
- Cut long cylinders of pumpkin flesh using an apple-corer, and steam for no more than 4 minutes. Refresh immediately in cold water, then drain and dry them on kitchen paper.
- Asparagus – the cooking time is very variable according to its age and thickness, so just test as you go, and don't let it get limp!

## FRESH TOMATO AND PEPPER SALSA

Hot, raw and invigorating, this lively salsa could not be simpler. The proportions are not critical, but it's a good idea to stick to about two parts tomato to one part sweet pepper, by volume.

The amount of chilli included depends on the ferocity of the particular chillies used (they vary enormously) and, of course, personal preference. When handling chillies I suggest wearing rubber gloves, since any juice on the fingers is easily transferred to eyes or other delicate skin, with painful results. This can happen several hours after your hands have been in contact with the chillies, even after washing. It is worth chopping the chillies and garlic quite finely, to eliminate the risk of large chunks escaping the food processor blades.

**2 or 3 medium-sized unpeeled ripe tomatoes, coarsely chopped**  
**1 small or ½ a large sweet red pepper, de-seeded and coarsely chopped**  
**1 clove of garlic, peeled and finely chopped**  
**½ a small red onion, chopped (more, if you like it)**  
**a generous bunch fresh coriander leaves, washed and de-stalked**  
**1 tablespoon olive oil**  
**salt, to taste**  
**a few drops of fresh lime juice**  
**between ½ and 2 fresh red chillies (see above) – de-seeded and finely chopped**

Put all the ingredients in a food processor and whiz briefly (use the pulse setting), so that some texture is retained. Stir the salsa just before serving as it tends to separate out a little, but don't leave it sitting around for too long or it will lose its freshness.

Serve with Margaritas and tortilla chips as an appetizer, or as part of a Mexican main course with tortillas, *Refritos* (page 92) and *Guacamole* (page 54).

### VARIATION

Use yellow tomatoes and/or peppers to vary the colour-scheme.

SERVES 4

When the aubergine is quite soft, remove the pan lid, add the mushrooms and garlic, turn the heat up slightly and stir. Give the seasoning liquid a last-minute stir, then tip it into the pan with the vegetables. Cook, stirring, with the pan uncovered, until the aubergine is tender, virtually all the liquid has evaporated and the mixture is quite dry. Add the chopped coriander leaf at the end of the cooking time. Allow the filling to cool a little before attempting to fill the wontons.

#### ASSEMBLY

Keeping the unused pile of wonton pastry covered with polythene or foil, take individual squares of pastry and place a scant tablespoonful of filling in the centre. Gather up the edges of the pastry and pinch them together firmly around the filling, excluding as much air as possible. The shape you should be aiming for is that of an old-fashioned, spherical Christmas pudding gathered up in a cloth. Don't be too generous with the filling, as this makes the wontons more likely to disintegrate during cooking. Place the little parcels on a floured plate or baking sheet until you've finished making them, but don't leave them sitting around for too long as the filling may seep and make them soggy.

#### DIGRESSION – THE SPRING ROLL OPTION

If you find making the wonton parcels too much of a fiddle or just fancy a change, the pastries can be used to make mini spring rolls. Place a line of filling along one side of the pastry square and roll up, tucking the ends in securely as you go to avoid leaks. Seal the pastry with a little cold water applied with your finger tip, then fry the spring rolls as described below. If you have to use filo instead of wontons this option works better than the 'Christmas pudding' method.

#### TO FRY

Deep-fry the wontons a few at a time in hot oil for a couple of minutes until they turn crisp and golden. Drain them well and blot with kitchen paper. Cooked in this way they can be served hot or at room temperature. If it's more convenient to cook them in advance, they can be re-heated in a warm oven for 5–10 minutes.

#### TO STEAM

Place the wontons in a steamer, sitting each one on a small square of non-stick baking parchment (to prevent them sticking to the steamer). Cover with a lid and steam over boiling water for about 8 minutes, then serve immediately.

SERVES 4

## SOUPS – SOME GROUND RULES FOR IMPROVISATION

To make a smooth, creamy soup you generally start by sautéing the vegetables in a little olive oil or butter, or a mixture of the two. Adding oil to the butter prevents it from burning. Usually, you will need onions and perhaps garlic, with whatever other vegetable you want to use. Unless you're deliberately setting out to make a mixed vegetable soup, it's probably better to stick to one main vegetable ingredient. That way your soup will taste of something definite and identifiable. If you want quite a thick soup, add peeled, diced potato at this stage. One large or two to three small potatoes will be enough for most recipes – too many and you end up with something resembling wallpaper paste!

Anyone trying to minimize fat intake may omit the sautéing stage entirely and just simmer the vegetables in stock. It doesn't make much discernible difference to the end result.

After the initial sauté, pour in just enough vegetable stock to cover the vegetables and simmer, with a lid on the pan, until the vegetables are tender. Depending on the vegetables chosen and the size to which you've cut them, this will take between twenty and forty minutes. For a cream soup the vegetables need to be very tender – this is not the time for cooking them *al dente*.

Purée the cooked vegetables and stock in a food processor or blender. The texture can be varied by leaving some of the vegetable chunks whole. Appropriate fresh or frozen herbs can be added at this stage. Most herbs do not benefit from being cooked and are best added near the end of the process. The herb leaves should be washed and can be put in the food processor whole – they'll get chopped during the blending. Return the soup to the pan for re-heating, finishing and final adjustment of seasonings.

Add more stock or milk if the soup is too thick. Stir in some cream if you want to make the texture more velvety. To make a creamy soup without using dairy products, use creamed coconut, chopped and stirred into the hot soup just before serving. It is as well to test a couple of times as you gradually add the coconut – the flavour should not be overwhelming. Coconut adds a slight sweetness, which you may want to counterbalance with a touch of lemon juice or vinegar.

I generally make soup with Marigold Swiss Vegetable Bouillon Powder, rather than home-made stock, but if you want to make your own there is a good general purpose recipe on page 208. The stock powder is quite salty, so if using it, don't add extra salt without first tasting.

Some of the following recipes make quite large quantities of soup, often enough for 6–8 servings. This is deliberate, since it's virtually as easy to make a lot as a little, and soup generally keeps very well in the fridge for a few days. Many of the soups also freeze successfully (in individual portions for maximum flexibility) and make a welcome quick snack.

## SPICED CREAM OF PUMPKIN SOUP WITH SEVILLE ORANGE

This soup is flavoured with tangy, bitter Seville oranges – the kind used for marmalade – a fantastic and much under-used ingredient. They are only available for a short time in the middle of winter, so if you can't get them use a little lemon juice instead.

The smoked paprika also falls into the category of very nice but not absolutely essential. You can often find it in the specialist ingredients section of major supermarkets, and if you see it I'd urge you to buy some. It has a wonderful and distinctive aroma, and a little goes a long way.

Any type of pumpkin or winter squash may be used.

**700 to 900 g (1½ to 2 lb) pumpkin flesh (buy about a third extra to allow for wastage)**

**2 tablespoons olive oil**

**1 large or 2 small onions, chopped**

**1 potato, peeled and diced**

**3 stalks of celery, sliced**

**4 cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped**

**1 teaspoon chopped sage leaves**

**1 teaspoon chopped thyme leaves**

**1 teaspoon smoked paprika**

**1 litre (2 pints) vegetable stock**

**grated rind and juice of 2 Seville oranges (or the juice of half a lemon)**

**60 g (2 oz) creamed coconut**

**salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1 or 2 teaspoons of sugar if necessary**

**fresh snipped chives**

**swirl of crème fraîche to garnish (omit for vegans)**

Either peel and dice the pumpkin (an easy method of doing this is given in the *Pumpkin risotto* recipe on page 98) or, if you have the oven on for something else, halve, de-seed, and bake the pumpkin cut sides down on an oiled tray in the oven until tender.

Heat the oil in a large soup pan, add the vegetables (raw pumpkin, onions, celery, garlic and potato), sage, thyme and paprika, and fry, stirring, over a moderate heat for a few minutes. Pour in the stock and bring the soup to the boil. Cover the pan and simmer until the vegetables are completely tender – about 20–30 minutes. If using pre-baked pumpkin, scoop out the flesh and add it to the pan towards the end of the cooking time.

Purée the soup in a food processor or blender in batches and return it to the pan to re-heat. Add the orange rind and juice, stir in the creamed coconut, and adjust the seasoning if necessary. It may need a little sugar to correct the acidity. If it seems too thick, add a little more hot vegetable stock (or milk for non-vegans).

Serve out the soup and garnish each portion with crème fraîche and chives.

SERVES 4 FOR LUNCH, 6 AS A STARTER

## LOVAGE SOUP

Lovage is a herb you are unlikely to find fresh on the supermarket shelves. I don't know why, because it has a terrific, intense celery flavour and is very easy indeed to grow, much easier than basil, for instance. Do not be alarmed at reports of its vast size. It can easily be kept within bounds by frequent picking. Indeed, the leaves should be picked young, ideally when they are about 15 cm (6 inches) long, and certainly before they become large and coarse. They freeze well (which is worth doing, if only so that you can make this lovely soup in the winter months) and the frequent picking encourages the plant to produce more. One plant is ample for the average household.

This soup, comfort food *par excellence*, is delicious served with hot garlic or herb bread; see *Herb butters* (page 205).

Thanks to my husband Andrew for this particular incarnation of the recipe – his inclusion of carrot and egg yolk gives the soup a beautiful delicate golden glow.

**2 large onions, peeled and chopped**  
**1 large carrot, peeled and chopped**  
**1 large or 2 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped**  
**½ a head of celery, washed and sliced**  
**2 tablespoons of olive oil**  
**500 ml (18 fl oz) vegetable stock**  
**handful of young lovage leaves, washed and de-stalked (about 15–20 g)**  
**100 ml (4 fl oz) cream**  
**100 ml (4 fl oz) milk**  
**2 egg yolks**  
**salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Sauté all the vegetables (onions, carrots, potato and celery) in the olive oil for a few minutes. Pour in the vegetable stock. Bring to the boil, turn down to a simmer, put a lid on the pan and cook for about 30 minutes, until the vegetables are tender.

Put the lovage leaves in the food processor or blender and whiz the soup with them, in batches if necessary. In the last batch, add the milk, cream and egg yolks. Put it all back in the rinsed-out pan and re-heat gently, adding salt and pepper to taste. Don't let it boil, or the egg yolks will curdle.

SERVES 3 FOR LUNCH, 4 OR 5 AS A STARTER