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# Turning Up the Heat on Lettuce: Lettuce and Green Garlic Soup

Variante : remplacée l'ail verte par de la fleur d'ail.

By MARTHA ROSE SHULMAN

Every once in a while I put out a message on the [Recipes for Health Facebook](#) page asking readers to tell me what they're getting in their C.S.A. produce baskets, what they need recipes for. The most recent responses reflected an overabundance of lettuce. One reader replied: "Lettuce. So much lettuce. Lettuce to the point where I get a nervous tic just thinking about eating another salad."

So I decided to devote most of the recipes this week to dishes that involve cooking lettuce. I couldn't resist one simple romaine and radish salad, but the rest of the dishes are cooked. I used the tough outer leaves of romaine or leaf lettuce in blended sauces and entire heads in soups. I tested several classic French braised lettuce recipes, but as promising as these looked on paper, they didn't appeal to me nearly as much as the more vibrant Chinese stir-fried lettuce dishes I tried, or the puréed soups. In the French braised dishes, the life seemed to be cooked out of the lettuces.

I used sturdy lettuces like romaine and leaf lettuce for the cooked dishes, not tender spring mixes, which really should be dedicated to salads. Bitter lettuces with tough outer leaves, like curly endive (a.k.a. escarole or chicory) and Batavia, stand up to cooking the same way greens like kale do. Use the recipes not only when you have a surfeit of lettuce in your C.S.A. basket, but also for the tough outer leaves of the one head of romaine in your fridge that you don't want to include in your salads.

The only recipe this week that has a high caloric content is a bean and chicory combo, and those calories and carbs come mostly from the beans, which also contribute lots of great nutrients, like protein and fiber.

## Lettuce and Green Garlic Soup

Use a flavorful broth – chicken or vegetable – to enhance the subtle flavors in comforting soup.

1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil



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1 medium onion, chopped

1 bulb green garlic, stalks and papery layers removed, roughly chopped

1/2 cup rice

7 cups chicken or vegetable stock

1/2 cup parsley leaves

A bouquet garni made with a bay leaf and a few sprigs each parsley and thyme, tied together

Salt to taste

3/4 pound lettuce leaves, washed and coarsely chopped (8 cups)

A generous amount of freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley or chives for garnish

Freshly grated Parmesan for garnish

1. Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy soup pot over medium heat and add the onion. Cook, stirring, until it is tender, about 5 minutes. Add a generous pinch of salt and the garlic and cook, stirring, until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the rice, stock, parsley leaves and bouquet garni, and bring to a boil. Add the lettuce and salt to taste, reduce the heat, cover and simmer over low heat for 30 minutes. The tough ribs of the lettuce leaves should be thoroughly tender.

2. Using an immersion blender or a regular blender (working in batches and covering the blender with a kitchen towel to prevent the hot soup from splashing), blend the soup until smooth. If using a regular blender, return the soup to the heat. Add lots of freshly ground pepper, taste and adjust salt. Heat through and serve, garnishing each bowl with chopped fresh parsley or chives and freshly grated Parmesan.

**Yield:** 4 servings.

**Advance preparation:** You can make this a day ahead, but you will probably want to thin it out a bit when you reheat it.

**Nutritional information per serving:** 174 calories; 4 grams fat; 1 gram saturated fat; 1 gram polyunsaturated fat; 3 grams monounsaturated fat; 0 milligrams cholesterol; 29 grams carbohydrates; 3 grams dietary fiber; 60 milligrams sodium (does not include salt to taste); 7

grams protein

*Martha Rose Shulman is the author of "The Very Best of Recipes for Health."*