

Carrot soup

with caraway



The take-homes

Elevate the ordinary

Even the most pared-back soup can be finished with a topping that takes it to next level flavour.

Think texture

Straining a pureed soup through a sieve makes a huge difference in yielding a velvety texture. Adding a potato helps the carrots (not naturally soft, smooth or creamy) blend.

Listen to the ingredient

Let the ingredient lead. Double-cream yoghurt might counter the sugar-sweet supermarket carrots in a way that more subtly sweet, earthy farm carrots don't need.

Add flavour to the crouton with brown butter and toasted spice, for example.

But **treat each element separately** to maximise individual flavours.

And **butter and season after toasting**.

The story

'Sunlight soup' is how this carrot soup was described by a workshop guest, who happened to be sitting in a sunbeam that made everything shine brighter and even more peachy gold.

This is the simplest illustration of soup. Nothing more than an onion for the aromatic base, the vegetable that lends its name as the body of the soup, and a light broth as the liquid. What brings it to life are the dazzling playmates on top.

A spoonful of double-cream yoghurt acts as a foil for sweetness, hazelnut-brown butter coaxes it from homely to the edge of luxurious, and caraway seeds are botanically related to the carrot. But a buttered crouton can offer just the right contrasting crunch.

– Nikki

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Carrot soup

The aromatic base | 150g onion

Melt 30ml (2 tablespoons) unsalted butter in a medium pot over low heat and add one brown onion, sliced, and a half teaspoon sea salt and sweat (lid on) over low heat for 15 minutes.

The veggies | 500g carrot

Add 500g peeled and sliced carrots, and a fresh bay leaf (if you have), replace the lid and cook for five minutes. If adding a peeled and sliced potato, it's around 400g carrots and 100g potato.

Add stock and simmer | 1 litre broth

Add one litre light homemade chicken broth, increase the heat and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat so it is simmering and replace the lid – you want to keep all the steam in, so the liquid doesn't evaporate. Cook for about 30 minutes or until the carrots are soft.

Blend and finish

Remove the bay leaf (if using) and blend until smooth with a hand-held stick blender. Taste and add a pinch to quarter teaspoon salt to sharpen flavour, a pinch of white pepper and, if you like, freshly grated nutmeg. Strain through a sieve. If reheating later and it needs thinning out, add 125ml to 250ml broth. Finish with a spoon of double-cream yoghurt, a drizzle of browned butter and toasted caraway seeds or caraway buttered croutons.

Buttered croutons

To prepare the croutons, pound one tablespoon of toasted caraway seeds with a half teaspoon of sea salt in a pestle and mortar. Toss one cup of toasted croutons with two tablespoons of browned butter and two teaspoons of the caraway seasoning (put the rest on the table for seasoning the soup should anyone need more salt / caraway).

The croutons

Preheat the oven to 180°C with the rack in the middle. Slice the crusts off **half of a day-old wheat sourdough loaf** and cut into 1.5cm x 1.5cm x 2.5cm cubes. Spread out on a baking sheet and bake, turning halfway through, if necessary, for 10 to 15 minutes or until golden brown.

The toasted spice

To toast the caraway seeds, heat a cast iron pan over a high heat until smoking hot. Working quickly, remove the pan from the heat, tip in **one tablespoon of caraway seeds** and move them around using a wooden spatula until they crackle and pop and you can smell them. Tip into a mortar to cool slightly before pounding.

The browned butter

You're aiming for a clear melted butter that smells nutty with golden brown bits (the milk solids) suspended in it. At first the milk solids will

separate out, then they will start to brown. Although you only need two tablespoons of butter, working with a larger quantity is easier to control. Use the rest for cooking.

Add **120g unsalted butter** to a small pot with a silver or white enamelled base (to see the colour changing) and heat over a medium-high heat on a small burner. When the butter stops splattering, goes quiet, and gets foamy, keep tilting and swirling the pot to check the colour of the milk solids on the bottom. As soon as they start turning dark gold, take the pot off the heat and tip the butter into a bowl (to stop it cooking). Spoon over the soup.



Nikki and Brandon

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