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The colder weather prompts us to seek basic comforts not only in our homes, but also in our food. Comfort food in winter is about simplicity and warmth. Think soup. We love soup in winter. Who doesn't, right? What better way to escape winter's chill than to just relax with a nice hot cuppa soup.

No one has a monopoly on that soup of all soups – chicken soup. Here's a healthy, hearty version that is sure to warm you up even on the coldest days.

Kotosoupa – κοτόσουπα, is chicken soup – a great cold weather fighter that works well either as a flavorful first course or main dish. This soup is often prepared with small orzo pasta, but feel free to use your favorite.

You need: 2 pounds of chicken (~1/2 chicken), a medium potato– peeled and cubed, 2 celery stalks, 2-3 celery stalks– chopped, 2 carrots– sliced, a whole onion, another onion– finely diced, a cup of roma or plum tomatoes– chopped, a large zucchini– sliced and quartered, a half cup of your favorite soup pasta, a third cup of olive oil, salt and pepper to taste.

Clean and rinse the chicken well. Place in a pot with the whole onion, celery stalks, salt and pepper. Cover with 12-14 cups of water, and bring to a boil. Skim off foam as it comes to the surface. Reduce heat to a slow boil for 40 to 45 minutes. Remove the chicken and save the broth. Remove skin, bones and dice the chicken meat into small pieces. Strain the broth into a bowl. Discard the onion and celery.

In the soup pot, heat the oil and sauté the chopped onion until soft. Add tomatoes and sauté a few more minutes. Add chicken broth, potato, carrots, sliced celery, diced onion and zucchini. Cover with water and bring to a boil, reduce to a slow boil and cook for an hour. Add water as needed. Add the chicken and boil for 15 minutes more. Add your pasta and boil another 5 minutes. Cover and let it all rest for 10 minutes before serving. Serves 6-8.

Here's another excellent cold weather soup – something very traditional.

Fasolatha – φασολάδα, has been a mainstay of Greek cooking since ancient times. Fasolatha soup is also the national dish of Greece and represents the best attributes of Greek cuisine: legumes, vegetables, herbs, and olive oil. Whether you make it with tomato (red) or lemon (white), it is customary to serve this hot hearty soup with a crusty bread, feta cheese and black olives.

You need: a pound of dry beans, a cup of olive oil, a medium potato, peeled and cubed, 2 or 3 stalks of chopped celery, 2 sliced carrots, add sea salt and pepper to taste. (Options: some sliced onion, a couple of small hot peppers.) For traditional “red” soup, add a tablespoon of tomato paste, For “white” soup, add the juice of a lemon before serving.

Soak the beans well – overnight in lukewarm water. Drain, rinse, and cover the beans with fresh water in a soup pot. Bring to a boil, cook for 5 more minutes and drain. Rinse the beans and pot, then add fresh water to at least one inch above. Add oil, ground pepper, sliced carrots, cubed potato, celery, (options: onion, hot peppers) and tomato paste. Bring to a full boil, cover and simmer on low heat for about 90 minutes. The beans should be soft but not crumbly. The softness of beans is a personal preference, so beans may need to cook longer. When cooking is nearly done add salt. Serves 4-6.

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