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Vancouver Kingsway



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# Accidental Balabusta



## Scrumptious soup 'n' cookies

SHELLEY CIVKIN

Treat your friends to one little taste of my Kermit Soup (aka kale-and-potato soup) and I guarantee they'll be green with envy. Granted, it's an unholy colour, which could be off-putting to some, but don't dismiss it out of spoon. Even those who vigorously eschew kale (and aren't partial to green) will be begging for seconds.

During these seemingly endless, dark days of fall and winter, there's nothing more comforting than a thick, hearty soup. (Unless of course it's a healthy serving of 15-year-old Balvenie, but that's just wasted calories.) To me, soups are the bait-and-switch of mealtimes. If you haven't been shopping in awhile, and all you're planning for dinner is tuna sandwiches, then a good, substantial soup can easily step up to the plate and take on the starring role. After all, soup has got so much going for it: it's filling, scrumptious and everything else pales by comparison. Especially if it's Kermit Soup (you'll see what I'm talking about soon enough). Don't feel you need to apologize for its aberrant tint. I mean, just take a look around at the freakish hair colours you see on the streets. Kermit Soup has absolutely nothing to be embarrassed about. Nor do you.

It does help if you have a really good blender to make this soup. In fact, it's rather essential. I've got a Breville at home and that sucker could crush rocks. (I'm pretty sure my blender has a bigger engine than my car.) Yams? No problem. Acorn squash? A joke. Carrots? In its sleep. Not that my recipe calls for any of those. Just saying. So, without further ado – meet the star of the dinner show.

### KERMIT SOUP

- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 small/medium Yukon gold potatoes, diced
- half a large yellow onion
- 6 cups baby kale, chopped and lightly packed (the store wouldn't let me take it without parental permission, so I used adult kale instead)
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 quart (4 cups) chicken (or mushroom) broth
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Mince the garlic.
2. Peel and chop the onion.
3. Peel and cube the potatoes.
4. Rinse kale and drain it well. Remove the thick stems then chop it up.
5. Melt butter over medium heat in a heavy soup pan.
6. Add garlic, onion, potatoes, and



Kermit Soup, ready to serve.

salt and pepper to taste.

7. Stir and cook for several minutes over medium heat.

8. Add the broth and bring it to a boil. Skim off fat from the top.

9. Gently simmer *with the lid on* for about 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

10. Add the kale and cook *without the lid* for about three to five minutes or until tender.

11. Transfer the soup to a blender a few cups at a time and puree. You might want to remove the little circle part of the blender lid to let some of the steam escape (but *not* while the blender is running). As each pureed batch is ready, pour it into another saucepan.

12. Ready to serve! It's even better reheated the next day, and it's good cold, too. If you're not too hungry, have some bread with it and you've got yourself a light, yet filling fall meal. You're welcome.

So, by now you've devoured your Kermit Soup and tuna sandwiches. To great acclaim. The soup, that is. An hour-and-a-half goes by and you're jonesing for something sweet. Now what? You could get in your car and drive to some overpriced, hipster dessert restaurant that charges \$12.95 for a two-inch purple yam, all-vegan crème brûlée. Or, you could rock it old school. In the comfort of your own home. With Weetabix Chocolate Chip Cookies.

Yes, Virginia, Weetabix is more than just a breakfast cereal. Plus, it adds a nice crunchy texture to your cookies that you won't soon forget (unless you overdo it with that 15-year-old Balvenie I referenced earlier. But that's on you, not me). I always keep a box of Weetabix around, just in case of a cookie emergency. Which seems to happen with increasing frequency. And there are always chocolate chips hidden in my freezer (as if I don't know where they are). So, go ahead, don your apron, pretend you're Suzie Homemaker

or Donna Reed and bake your family some irresistible cookies.

### WEETABIX CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

- 4 Weetabix, crushed
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 3/4 cup soft butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 1/4 cup granulated white sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

1. Mix together crushed Weetabix, flour, baking soda and salt in medium bowl. Set aside.

2. In a large bowl, using a hand mixer, cream together butter/margarine and sugars. Beat in vanilla and egg.

3. Add dry ingredients and mix well. Stir in chocolate chips.

4. Drop dough by tablespoonsful onto an ungreased baking sheet (or line with parchment paper).

5. Bake at 350°F for 12 minutes (or slightly longer for a crispier cookie).

6. Eat and repeat. Or eat 'em and weep. I'll leave that to your discretion. These are so popular that you might want to make two batches at once. Just to be on the safe side. One batch never lasts more than half a day in my home, and there are only two of us. Again, you're welcome.

These aren't exactly balabatish recipes. More like nouveau accidental balabusta. But I do stand behind them. You see, I'm channeling my inner balabusta while I make them, and that's good enough for me. I'll leave the rugelach, kichele and komish broit to some other ambitious balabusta. On some other day. It just goes to show that food doesn't need some fancy Yiddish name to taste geshmak. One bite of these Weetabix cookies and one spoonful of this Kermit Soup and you'll be kvelling all over the place. Just clean up after all that kvelling, OK? Bottom line: it's all about the heart and soul of the cook.

So, stop kvetching and get thee into the kitchen. Those cookies and soup aren't going to make themselves. Just promise me one thing – you won't ask for a refund if you don't love the Kermit Soup. 🍪

**Shelley Civkin**, aka the *Accidental Balabusta*, is a happily retired librarian and communications officer. For 17 years, she wrote a weekly book review column for the *Richmond Review*. She's currently a freelance writer and volunteer.