

Recipe 189

Ingredients

A turtle, 6 slices of ham, 2 knuckles of veal, 1 large bunch of sweet herbs, 3 bay-leaves, parsley, green onions, 1 onion, 6 cloves, 4 blades of mace, 1/4 lb. of fresh butter, 1 bottle of Madeira, 1 lump of sugar. For the *_Quenelles a Tortue_*, 1 lb. of veal, 1 lb. of bread crumbs, milk, 7 eggs, cayenne, salt, spices, chopped parsley, the juice of 2 lemons.

Method

To make this soup with less difficulty, cut off the head of the turtle the preceding day. In the morning open the turtle by leaning heavily with a knife on the shell of the animal's back, whilst you cut this off all round. Turn it upright on its end, that all the water, &c. may run out, when the flesh should be cut off along the spine, with the knife sloping towards the bones, for fear of touching the gall, which sometimes might escape the eye. When all the flesh about the members is obtained, wash these clean, and let them drain. Have ready, on the fire, a large vessel full of boiling water, into which put the shells; and when you perceive that they come easily off, take them out of the water, and prick them all, with those of the back, belly, fins, head, &c. Boil the back and belly till the bones can be taken off, without, however, allowing the softer parts to be sufficiently done, as they will be boiled again in the soup. When these latter come off easily, lay them on earthen dishes singly, for fear they should stick together, and put them to cool. Keep the liquor in which you have blanched the softer parts, and let the bones stew thoroughly in it, as this liquor must be used to moisten all the sauces. All the flesh of the interior parts, the four legs and head, must be drawn down in the following manner:--Lay the slices of ham on the bottom of a very large stewpan, over them the knuckles of veal, according to the size of the turtle; then the inside flesh of the turtle, and over the whole the members. Now moisten with the water in which you are boiling the shell, and draw it down thoroughly. It may now be ascertained if it be thoroughly done by thrusting a knife into the fleshy part of the meat. If no blood appears, it is time to moisten it again with the liquor in which the bones, &c. have been boiling. Put in a large bunch of all such sweet herbs as are used in the cooking of a turtle,--sweet basil, sweet marjoram, lemon thyme, winter savory, 2 or 3 bay-leaves, common thyme, a handful of parsley and green onions, and a large onion stuck with 6 cloves. Let the whole be thoroughly done. With respect to the members, probe them, to see whether they are done, and if so, drain and send them to the larder, as they are to make their appearance only when the soup is absolutely completed. When the flesh is also completely done, strain it through a silk sieve, and make a very thin white *_roux_*; for turtle soup must not be much thickened. When the flour is sufficiently done on a slow fire, and has a good colour, moisten it with the liquor, keeping it over the fire till it boils. Ascertain that the sauce is neither too thick nor too thin; then draw the stewpan on the side of the stove, to skim off the white scum, and all the fat and oil that rise to the surface of the sauce. By this time all the softer parts will be sufficiently cold; when they must be cut to about the size of one or two inches square, and thrown into the soup, which must now be left to simmer gently. When done, skim off all the fat and froth. Take all the leaves of the herbs from the stock,--sweet basil, sweet marjoram, lemon thyme, winter savory, 2 or 3 bay-leaves, common thyme, a handful of parsley and green onions, and a large onion cut in four pieces, with a few blades of mace. Put these in a stewpan, with about 1/4 lb. of fresh butter, and let it simmer on a slow fire till quite melted, when pour in 1 bottle of good Madeira, adding a small bit of sugar, and let it boil gently for 1 hour. When done, rub it through a tammy, and add it to the soup. Let this boil, till no white scum rises; then take with a skimmer all the bits of turtle out of the sauce, and put them in a clean stewpan: when you have all out, pour the soup over the bits of turtle, through a tammy, and proceed as follows:--

QUENELLES A TORTUE.--Make some *_quenelles a tortue_*, which being substitutes for eggs, do not require to be very delicate. Take out the fleshy part of a leg of veal, about 1 lb., scrape off all the meat, without leaving any sinews or fat, and soak in milk about the same quantity of crumbs of bread. When the bread is well soaked, squeeze it, and put it into a mortar, with the veal, a small quantity of calf's udder, a little butter, the yolks of 4 eggs, boiled hard, a little cayenne pepper, salt, and spices, and pound the whole very fine; then thicken the mixture with 2 whole eggs, and the yolk of another. Next try this *_farce_* or stuffing in boiling-hot water, to ascertain its consistency: if it is too thin, add the yolk of an egg. When the *_farce_* is perfected, take half of it, and put into it some chopped parsley. Let the whole cool, in order to roll it of the size of the yolk of an egg; poach it in salt and boiling water, and when very hard, drain on a sieve, and put it into the turtle. Before you send up, squeeze the juice of 2 or 3 lemons, with a little cayenne pepper, and pour that into the soup. THE FINS may be served as a *_plat d'entree_* with a little turtle sauce; if not, on the following day you may warm the turtle *_au bain marie_*, and serve the members entire, with a *_matelote_* sauce, garnished with mushrooms, cocks' combs, *_quenelles_*, &c. When either lemon-juice or cayenne pepper has been introduced, no boiling must take place. *_Note_*--It is necessary to observe, that the turtle prepared a day before it is used, is generally preferable, the flavour being more uniform. Be particular, when you dress a very large turtle, to preserve the green fat (be cautious not to study a very brown colour,--the natural green of the fish is preferred by every epicure and true connoisseur) in a separate stewpan, and likewise when the turtle is entirely done, to have as many tureens as you mean to serve each time. You cannot put the whole in a large vessel, for many reasons: first, it will be long in cooling; secondly, when you take some out, it will break all the rest into rags. If you warm in a *_bain marie_*, the turtle will always retain the same taste; but if you boil it often, it becomes strong, and loses the delicacy of its flavour. THE COST OF TURTLE SOUP.--This is the most expensive soup brought to table. It is sold by the quart,--one guinea being the standard price for that quantity. The price of live turtle ranges from 8d. to 2s. per lb., according to supply and demand. When live turtle is dear, many cooks use the tinned turtle, which is killed when caught, and preserved by being put in hermetically-sealed canisters, and so sent over to England. The cost of a tin, containing 2 quarts, or 4 lbs., is about 2, and for a small one, containing the green fat, 7s. 6d. From these about 6 quarts of good soup may be made. [Illustration: THE TURTLE.] THE GREEN TURTLE.--This reptile is found in large numbers on the coasts of all the islands and continents within the tropics, in both the old and new worlds. Their length is often five feet and upwards, and they range in weight from 50 to 500 or 600 lbs. As turtles find a constant supply of food on the coasts which they frequent, they are not of a quarrelsome disposition, as the submarine meadows in which they pasture, yield plenty for them all. Like other species of amphibia, too, they have the power of living many months without food; so that they live harmlessly and peaceably together, notwithstanding that they seem to have no common bond of association, but merely assemble in the same places as if entirely by accident. England is mostly supplied with them from the West Indies, whence they are brought alive and in tolerable health. The green turtle is highly prized on account of the delicious quality of its flesh, the fat of the upper and lower shields of the animal being esteemed the richest and most delicate parts. The soup, however, is apt to disagree with weak stomachs. As an article of luxury, the turtle has only come into fashion within the last 100 years, and some hundreds of tureens of turtle soup are served annually at the lord mayor's dinner in Guildhall. A GOOD FAMILY SOUP.

Source: *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management (1861)*

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