

Leslie's Corn & Sausage Chowder

Corn and Sausage Chowder

Makes 6 to 8 servings

CORN CHOWDER IS A POPULAR SOUP ALL THROUGH THE HEARTLAND, AND IN New England and the South as well. Recipes often contain bacon and salt pork, but we've substituted a highly smoked sausage instead. Use any flavorful smoked sausage, such as smoked kielbasa.

The key to this dish is the freshness of the corn. Ideally you should try to make this chowder at the height of the corn season when the ears can be freshly picked and are perfectly sweet. Use fresh corn if you can and be sure to scrape the cobs with the dull side of a knife after you slice the kernels off to get all that delicious milky juice into the chowder. When making this soup out of season, use frozen corn rather than imported fresh corn, because the frozen has a sweeter flavor.

2 tablespoons butter	1/8 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 pound smoked sausage, such as Cajun-Style Andouille (page 44), Smoked Bratwurst (page 54), or Smoked Kielbasa (page 64), diced	2 sprigs fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried
1 onion, finely chopped	4 cups garden-fresh corn kernels (from about 4 ears) or frozen corn
1/2 cup chopped celery	2 cups half-and-half
1 fresh pimiento, red bell, or other sweet red pepper, seeded and chopped	2 egg yolks
2 red potatoes, peeled and diced	2 tablespoons cornstarch
4 cups chicken stock	1 cup buttermilk
2 bay leaves	Salt and freshly ground black pepper
	Tabasco sauce

Garnish

2 tablespoons butter
Chopped chives

In a large pot or Dutch oven, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the sausage and fry for 3 minutes. Add the onion and celery, and cook until soft, about 10 minutes. Add the fresh pimiento and potatoes, and sauté briefly. Pour in the stock. Bring to a boil, decrease the heat, and simmer. Add the bay leaves, cumin, and thyme, and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, until the potatoes and peppers are tender. Add the corn and any milky juices, along with the half-and-half. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes, until the corn is tender but still full of flavor. Remove the soup from the heat.

Whisk the egg yolks and the cornstarch into the buttermilk. Stir 1/2 cup of the soup into this mixture, and then add back to the soup in the pot, stirring well.

Return the soup to the stove. Heat without boiling to thicken. Taste for salt, pepper, and Tabasco. Serve with a bit of butter and chopped chives in each bowl.