

YOU ASKED FOR IT



BEN'S KOSHER RESTAURANT, DELICATESSEN AND CATERERS/COURTESY

Ben's Kosher Restaurant, Delicatessen and Caterers can go through 50 gallons of chicken soup with matzo ball in a day.

# Ben's great matzo ball soup



Claire Perez

**Q. I would like to have the recipe for Ben's matzo ball soup. It is very delicious. I wrote to you about a month ago. You replied to me but never sent the recipes. I would be very grateful to you if you would send them to me. — Barbara Guttell,**

Delray Beach

**A.** When I receive recipe requests I try to reply as quickly as possible, acknowledging receipt as a common courtesy. Occasionally a request will get lost in the shuffle or go unnoticed landing in a spam folder. More often than not, requests take several weeks if not months to fill. In general, chefs and restaurant owners are very busy people. The industry is beyond demanding and stressful. As a result, tracking down the proper powers to authorize recipe sharing takes rounds of phone tag before I even come close to asking if it's sautéed or steamed.

Sometimes I get lucky and reach an owner/chef on the first outreach and they spew the recipe off the top of their heads. Those are few and far between. For the recipes that I am fortunate to get my hands on, they are available in print and online at [sunsentinel.com/reciperequest](http://sunsentinel.com/reciperequest). So thank you, Barbara, for patiently waiting for the

**Claire's Tip of the Week:** Whenever possible, I try to cook with fresh herbs. But I'd never make a grocery store run for just a teaspoon of fresh thyme. Dried herbs tend to be more potent than fresh, so you don't have to use as much. As a rule of thumb, when converting recipes from fresh to dried herbs, reduce the amount to one-third. For example, 3 teaspoons equal 1 tablespoon, so if a recipe calls for a tablespoon of fresh basil, use a 1 teaspoon of dried.

matzo ball soup recipe from Ben's Kosher Restaurant, Delicatessen and Caterers (9942 Clint Moore Road, Boca Raton; 561-470-9963; [bensdeli.net](http://bensdeli.net)).

Ben's founder, Ronnie Dagoon, started building his deli empire in 1972. Fast forward 46 years later and Dagoon, still very involved in the business, keeps tabs on his six New York locations and his first and only restaurant outside of New York in Boca Raton.

Many of Ben's specialties are family recipes handed down from Dagoon's grandmother and mother, like the matzo ball soup. According to Dagoon, the secret to a great matzo ball soup recipe is a light matzo ball and a golden chicken soup made with whole chickens and chicken bones.

The baking powder in the matzo balls, and homemade broth, is a must to achieve Ben's results. His recipe is made fresh daily in 50-gallon kettles. Thankfully, the recipe he provided is scaled back for home cooks.

**Q. I recently dined at TooJay's and ordered the homemade shepherd's pie. The melody of flavors were incredibly fresh and flavorful. It was the epitome of comfort food. I would love it if you are able to get their rhepherd's pie recipe so I can re-create it at home. — Ashley Kozich, Hallandale Beach**

**A.** I've made a handful of requests for TooJay's (multiple locations; [toojays.com](http://toojays.com)) recipes over the years. Unfortunately, I never get very far. But I don't want to leave Ashley empty handed. So, I'm offering my recipe as a fill-in.

This happens to be a favorite dinner at my house. I've been making the same recipe for years, tweaking it along the way. I always make two — one to eat and one to freeze. What I like about this recipe is the delicious brown gravy it creates with the meat, unlike other versions that are too dry and bland for my tastes.

Some may argue this is more cottage pie than shepherd's pie because of the use of beef versus lamb. Use whatever suits your taste and budget. If you want to try a twist on the recipe, substitute ground turkey for the beef and sweet potatoes for the russets. I hope you enjoy the recipe as much as we do.

## Shepherd's pie my way

- 1 ½ pounds russet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ½ cup milk
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ½ pounds ground beef
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 ¼ cups beef broth
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 teaspoons fresh chopped rosemary
- 1 teaspoon fresh chopped thyme
- 1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels
- 1 cup fresh or frozen green peas
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**1.** Using a medium saucepan over medium high heat combine potatoes and enough cold salted water to cover. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to a gently boil and cook until fork tender. Drain and return potatoes to pan, add milk and butter. Using a potato masher, mash potatoes to desired consistency. Add Parmesan, season with salt and pepper, to taste, set aside and reserve.

**2.** Using a large saute pan over medium heat, heat the oil. Sauté onion and carrots until onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and saute until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add beef and saute, breaking up until browned and cooked through. Sprinkle flour over beef and cook 2 minutes. Add tomato paste, broth, Worcestershire sauce, rosemary and thyme, stirring to combine. Simmer until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Add corn and peas, stirring to combine. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

**3.** Transfer meat mixture to a 3-quart ovenproof casserole or baking dish. Top with mashed potatoes using a spatula to cover meat mixture.

**4.** Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Place casserole on a sheet pan. Bake until potatoes start to brown, about 20-25 minutes.

Makes 8 servings

**Nutrition information per serving:** 342 calories, 38% calories from fat, 15g fat, 6g saturated fat, 66mg cholesterol, 32g carbohydrates, 5g total sugar, 0g added sugar, 22g protein, 228mg sodium, 4g fiber

## Direct to you

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## Ronnie's old-fashioned chicken soup with matzo ball

- 12 cups cold water
- 2 pounds chicken bones
- 1 whole chicken, cavity rinsed and salted
- 1 large onion, quartered with skin
- 1 large carrot, peeled
- 1 parsnip, peeled
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 leek, sliced
- Half a head of fresh garlic, left intact
- 2 sprigs fresh dill
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1 ounce chicken base or bouillon cube for extra flavor if desired, optional
- 1 recipe Ben's matzo ball (see recipe)
- Chopped parsley, for garnish

**1.** Using a large stockpot, combine all soup ingredients, cover and bring to a boil. Boil gently until chicken is cooked through, about an hour depending on the size. Reduce heat to low and simmer one hour. Strain the soup, dice the carrot and reserve.

**2.** To serve, fill soup bowls with broth, carrot and matzo ball. Sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Makes about 8 servings with one matzo ball per serving

**Nutrition information per serving:** 197 calories, 42% calories from fat, 9g fat, g saturated fat, 74mg cholesterol, 20g carbohydrates, 4g total sugar,0g added sugar, 8g protein, 279mg sodium, 2g fiber

## Ben's matzo balls

- 4 extra large eggs
- ⅓ cup soy oil, plus more for rolling
- 1 ½ level cups matzo meal
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper
- ¼ teaspoon granulated garlic
- ¼ teaspoon granulated onion

**1.** Using a medium bowl, whisk together eggs and oil. Add matzo meal, baking powder, ¼ teaspoon salt, pepper, garlic and onion, stirring until smooth. Refrigerate 15 minutes.

**2.** Bring a large stockpot filled with water and remaining 1 tablespoon salt to boil over high heat. Roll matzo mixture into 12 balls with lightly oiled hands.

**3.** Place balls in boiling water and simmer until a fork comes clean when pierced, about 20-25 minutes.

**4.** Gently remove matzo balls from water and transfer to chicken soup.

Makes 12 balls

**Nutrition information per matzo ball:** 139 calories, 52% calories from fat, 8g fat, 2g saturated fat, 65mg cholesterol, 12g carbohydrates, 1g total sugar, 0g added sugar, 4g protein, 216 mg sodium,1 g fiber

## Contact us

**Email questions to:** [claire@ClairePerez.com](mailto:claire@ClairePerez.com)

**Or write to:** You Asked For It, Sun Sentinel, 333 SW 12th Ave., Deerfield Beach, 33442. Include your name, town and phone number.

# Slo-mo appetizer

## Radishes

**Prep:** 15 minutes

**Makes:** One appetizer, serves 4

- 2 bunches radishes with leaves — look for a variety of colors and sizes
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter (get the fancy stuff), softened
- 1-2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1-2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1-2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon finely chopped garlic
- Kosher salt
- Flaky salt, such as Maldon
- Crusty rye or French bread, optional

**1 Trim:** Wash and dry radishes. Slice each in half from stem to root. Using kitchen scissors, trim root so it trails off decorously. Snip away most leaves, letting each radish retain a sprightly leaf or two or, alternatively, give it a short, spiky 'do. You want the impression that radishes recently sprang, freshly washed and cut, from the garden.

**2 Swirl:** Drop butter into the food processor. Sprinkle in 1 tablespoon each of chopped dill and parsley. Pour in 1 teaspoon lemon juice, the garlic and ¼ teaspoon kosher salt. Swirl smooth. Taste. Add more herbs and lemon, if you like.

**3 Serve:** Find a big rustic cutting board or platter. Spread on all the butter in two or three dramatic swaths. Dot the butter with radishes, cut sides down. Sprinkle the composition with flaky salt. Serve as is, or with warm bread.



LEAH ESKIN

Home on the Range

Never hurry and never worry. Sensible advice from Charlotte, the renowned spider, weaver and heroine. But it's a tall order — never?

I decided to start slow, swearing off the hunch-shouldered hustle for an evening. Instead of hurtling through traffic, I stayed put. Instead of banging through dinner prep, I attempted attentive.

Turns out that radishes, like toddlers, are proud of their big bellies. They enjoy a good scrub behind the stems. And their greens can be snipped into all sorts of daring 'dos. Also of note: Smearing a platter with herb butter and dotting the butter with fancifully coiffed radishes is compelling, time-consuming work.

I doubt Charlotte's approach altered the



ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE; JOAN MORAVEK/FOOD STYLING

appetizer — dill-specked butter and salt-speckled radishes. But the process was a pleasure. And, given that I only managed a one-dish meal, it counts as a masterpiece of monotasking.

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