

The Soups of Mahi Koç

Laurie Koç

These soup recipes were written while Mahi Koç was visiting her son and daughter-in-law in Oregon during the summer of 1993. The recipes were developed using ingredients available in the United States, but closely follow the cooking traditions of Mahi Hanım's native cities Ağrı and Kars in Northeastern Turkey. There are as many variations of these soups as the number of meals served in the Koç household.

Afiyet olsun.

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©April 16, 1995

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Potato Rice Soup

Kıymalı Patatesli Pirinç Çorbası

1/4 cup ground beef
2 Tbs. tomato paste
1 Tbs. vegetable oil
3 cups water
2/3 cup long grain rice
1 potato, diced
additional water
1/2 cup parsley, cut up
salt to taste

Using a 2 quart saucepan, brown the ground beef. Add the oil and tomato paste and cook a few more minutes. Add the water and bring to a boil. Stir in the rice and cook over medium heat 15 minutes. Add the potato and continue cooking until potato and rice are tender. Add more water to nearly fill the pan, and bring to a boil again. Add salt to taste. Turn off heat and stir in parsley.

Rice Soup

Pirinç Çorbası

2 cubes of chicken or beef bouillon
1 Tbs. oil
2 Tbs. tomato paste *
3 cups water
2/3 cup long grain rice
additional water
salt to taste
1/2 cup parsley, cut up

Mix the oil and tomato paste in a 2 quart saucepan. Add water and bring to a boil. Add rice and boil at medium heat until rice is tender, 25–30 minutes. Add salt to taste and enough water to nearly fill the pan. Bring to a boil again. Turn off heat and stir in parsley.

* Or 1 cup of diced fresh tomatoes.

Red Lentil and Vegetable Soup

Sebzeli Kırmızı Mercimek Çorbası

1/4 cup ground beef (or 2 cubes bouillon or 1 can broth)
2 Tbs. tomato paste
3 cups water
salt to taste
2 Tbs. dried mint or a few sprigs fresh mint, cut up
3/4 cup red lentils *
1 potato, grated
1 carrot, grated
1 small tomato, grated
1/2 green pepper, diced
additional water

In a 2 quart saucepan, brown the ground beef. (If using broth or cubes, mix with water and continue.) Stir in tomato paste, then water. Add salt and mint and bring to a boil. Add lentils and vegetables and boil over medium heat until tender (45–50 minutes), adding more water while cooking to nearly fill the pan. Adjust the seasoning.

* Red lentils can be found in natural foods or Middle Eastern markets. They should be small and bright orange colored. The larger dull orange lentils are not as tender.

Red Lentil and Rice Soup

Kırmızı Mercimek ve Pirinç Çorbası

1/4 cup ground beef (or 2 cubes bouillon or 1 can broth)
2 Tbs. tomato paste
3 cups water
salt to taste
3/4 cup red lentils
1/3 cup long grain white rice
additional water
1/4 cup of parsley, cut up

In a 2 quart saucepan, brown the ground beef. (If using broth or cubes, mix with water and continue.) Stir in tomato paste, then water. Add salt and mint and bring to a boil. Add lentils and rice and boil over medium heat until tender (45–50 minutes), adding more water while cooking to nearly fill the pan. Stir in parsley and adjust the seasoning.

Yogurt Soup
Ayran Çorbasi

1/2 cup barley or hulled wheat
3 cups water
1 and 1/3 cups yogurt (reg., low, or non-fat)
3 Tbs. flour
1 can of beef or chicken broth or 2 bouillon cubes
1 Tbs. vegetable oil
1/2 cup onion, diced
2 Tbs. dried mint or fresh cilantro
additional water
salt to taste
sauce

Ahead of time, place the barley or wheat in a 2 quart saucepan with water, and cook until grain is quite soft, but not mushy (One to one-and-a-half hours). Cool and drain off excess water. Make a paste of the yogurt, flour, and salt, and stir into the pan of barley. Add broth or bouillon cubes. If using bouillon, add about 2 cups of water as well. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook about 5 minutes, stirring to prevent sticking. Turn off heat. In a frypan, sauté the onions in oil until transparent. Add mint or cilantro and stir-fry until onions are browned. Add this mixture to the soup with additional water and salt to taste. Bring to a boil again and cook 15 minutes. If desired, serve with the sauce drizzled into each bowl.

Sauce:

Melt 3 Tbs. oil or butter in a small pan or microwave. Stir in 1 Tbs. hungarian paprika or mild red pepper flakes and heat one minute more.

Yogurt Soup with Meatballs

Köfteli Ayran Çorbası

1/2 cup barley or hulled wheat
3 cups water
1 and 1/3 cups yogurt (reg., low, or non-fat)
3 Tbs. flour
2 tsp. salt
1 can of beef or chicken broth or 2 bouillon cubes
1 Tbs. vegetable oil
1/2 cup onion, diced
2 Tbs. dried mint or fresh cilantro
additional water
salt to taste
meatballs
sauce

Ahead of time, place the barley or wheat in a 2 quart saucepan with water, and cook until grain is quite soft, but not mushy (One to one-and-a-half hours). Cool and drain off excess water. Make a paste of the yogurt, flour, and salt, and stir into the pan of barley. Add broth or bouillon cubes. If using bouillon, add about 2 cups of water as well. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook about 5 minutes, stirring to prevent sticking. Turn off heat. In a frypan, sauté the onions in oil until transparent. Add mint or cilantro and stir-fry until onions are browned. Add this mixture to the soup with additional water, salt to taste, and the meatballs. Bring to a boil again and cook 15 minutes. If desired, serve with the sauce drizzled into each bowl.

Meatballs:

With a 1/2 cup of ground beef and salt to taste, make small (1/2 inch) meatballs. Use water on your hands as you form them so they are less sticky.

Sauce:

Melt 3 Tbs. oil or butter in a small pan or microwave. Stir in 1 Tbs. hungarian paprika or mild red pepper flakes and heat one minute more.

Yogurt Soup with Orzo
Şehriyeli Ayran Çorbası

3/4 cup orzo *
3 cups water
1 and 1/3 cups yogurt (reg., low, or non-fat)
3 Tbs. flour
2 tsp. salt
1 can of beef or chicken broth or 2 bouillon cubes
1 Tbs. vegetable oil
1/2 cup onion, diced
2 Tbs. dried mint or fresh cilantro
additional water
salt to taste

Cook orzo to al dente. Make a paste of the yogurt, flour, and salt, and stir into the pan of undrained orzo. Add broth or bouillon cubes. If using bouillon, add about 2 cups of water as well. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook about 5 minutes, stirring to prevent sticking. Turn off heat. In a frypan, sauté the onions in oil until transparent. Add mint or cilantro and stir-fry until onions are browned. Add this mixture to the soup with additional water and salt to taste. Bring to a boil again and cook 15 minutes.

* Orzo is the small pasta that looks like rice.

Yogurt Rice Soup
Yayla Çorbası

1/2 cup rice
3 cups water
2 cubes chicken bouillon
1 tsp. salt
3/4 cup yogurt
1/3 cup flour
additional water
a few sprigs parsley, cut up or dried mint

Place the rice, water, and bouillon in a 2 quart saucepan. Cook until rice is tender, 20–25 minutes. Make a paste of the yogurt, salt, and flour, and stir into the rice. Add enough water to nearly fill the pan. Bring to a boil again and cook 10–15 minutes. Just before it is finished cooking, add parsley or mint.

Mahi Hanım's Lentil Soup

Mercimek Çorbası

1 cup lentils
1 can beef or chicken broth
2 cups water
salt to taste
1/2 cup diced onions
2 Tbs. vegetable oil
a few sprigs of fresh mint (preferably “chocolate”), chopped
6–7 strands of fresh linguine or fettucine pasta, cut in 3 inch strips
additional water

Cook the lentils with broth and water until tender, 20–25 minutes. Add linguine strips, enough water to nearly fill pan, and salt. Boil until pasta is al dente, about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, in a shallow pan, fry the onions in oil until transparent. Add the mint and fry until onions begin to brown. Stir this mixture into the soup and allow to simmer 10 minutes more.

Bulgur Lentil Soup

Bulgurlu Mercimek Çorbası

2 Tbs. vegetable oil
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
1/4 cup diced onions
1 Tbs. dried mint
1 Tbs tomato paste
1 tsp. mild or med. red pepper flakes
2 tsp. salt
boiling water
1/3 cup bulgur
2/3 cup lentils
1 Tbs. flour dissolved in water

In a 2 quart saucepan, sauté the cilantro, onions, and mint in oil. Add tomato paste, stirring to blend. Add red pepper, salt, and boiling water to half fill the pan. Stir in bulgur and lentils and bring the mixture to a boil. Then cook over medium heat 15–20 minutes. Dissolve flour in a small amount of water and stir into soup. Add enough water to nearly fill pan. Cook 30–40 minutes more.

Orzo Soup

Şehriye Çorbası

2 Tbs. vegetable oil
2 Tbs. tomato paste
1 med. diced tomato
2 cubes of chicken bouillon
2 cups water
1 tsp. salt
3/4 cup orzo or broken-up vermicelli
1 tsp. dried mint, if desired
1/4 cup chopped parsley
lemon juice
additional water

Stir together the first three ingredients in a 2 quart saucepan. Heat until bubbly, then add water, bouillon, and salt and bring to a boil. Cook over medium heat 10 minutes; tomato should begin to break up. Add more water and bring to boil; then add orzo. Cook to al dente and turn off heat. Stir in parsley. Squeeze lemon juice into the soup now, or squeeze into each bowl when serving.

Spinach Soup

Ispanak Çorbası

1/4 cup ground beef
1/2 small onion
3–4 Tbs. tomato paste
1/2 cup rice
2 cups water
3 cups spinach, cut up
additional water
salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the onion and the ground beef. (If meat is very lean, sauté in oil.) Stir in tomato paste. Add two cups of water and bring to a boil. Stir in rice and cook until quite tender. Add the spinach and allow to wilt down with the lid closed. Then add enough water to nearly fill the pan. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil and cook 5–10 minutes more over medium heat.

Fruit and Nut Soup

Aşure

1 cup white beans
1 cup garbanzos
1 cup barley
1 cup dried apricots, cut up
1 cup raisins, cut up
1/2 cup figs, cut up
1 cup sugar, or to taste
water to make about four quarts
1/2 cup filberts, toasted
1/2 cup walnut pieces
ground walnuts for topping

The night before, rinse and soak the beans (garbanzo and white together) and the barley in 2 different bowls. In the morning, drain and cook until tender, again in 2 pans. In a large pot, combine beans, barley, fruit, sugar, and water. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until fruit is very soft and barley starch is released. Correct for sweetness; stir in filberts and walnuts. Allow to cool or refrigerate, if desired. Serve as snack or dessert with walnuts sprinkled on top.