

Almost Amish Recipes

Serving soup, salad, and bread is one of the easiest (and most flexible) ways to feed family and friends. Most soups taste even better the second day, so plan for leftovers. If more people show up than expected, you can always expand the soup with a bit more stock. For a heartier meal, offer grilled chicken or salmon to top the salad. And feel free to modify according to your family's tastes and what's in season—these recipes are very forgiving, a trait that the Amish have in abundance!

Breads

Homemade bread makes any meal special. I have provided three favorite recipes with traditional instructions. To keep things simple, however, I almost always use a hybrid system: after mixing the ingredients and completing the first rising in my bread maker, I shape the loaves, place them in a warm spot to rise, and then bake the bread in the oven.

Each recipe makes two loaves—one to eat and one to send home with guests or share with neighbors, *if* there are any leftovers! Be sure to take a stick of butter out of the refrigerator before the second rising, so it will be spreadable by mealtime.

Honey Whole Wheat with Poppy Seeds

This is my signature bread—the one that repeat guests most often request. It's best served warm from the oven with softened butter. If there are leftovers, sprinkle a slice with cinnamon sugar and pop it in the microwave for a few seconds—depending on the time of a day, it makes a healthy dessert or a memorable breakfast treat. Butter and milk can be omitted if you have vegans among you.

1½ c. warm water

1 Tbs. canola oil or butter

3 Tbs. honey

⅓ c. dried milk

½ tsp. salt

2 c. unbleached white flour

2 c. whole wheat flour

⅓ c. oat bran hot cereal, dry/uncooked (optional)

2 Tbs. poppy seeds

2 tsp. fast-rising dry yeast

Mix all ingredients. Knead. Cover and allow to rise in a warm place until double. (Or use the “dough only” setting on your bread maker.) Punch down and knead again. If dough feels sticky, add more flour.

Divide dough into halves and shape into two loaves. Place in greased 4x8 bread pans and allow to rise in a warm place until about double. Bake in preheated oven (350° degrees) for 25–30 minutes or until loaves sound hollow when tapped. Remove from pans and, if desired, run a stick of butter quickly over top of bread. Allow to cool slightly before slicing.

For rolls: Shape dough into 1½-inch round balls before second rising. Place two inches apart on baking sheets coated with nonstick spray. Bake 10 minutes at 350° or until done.

For a change of pace: Omit poppy seeds. Knead in ¾ c. dried cranberries before second rising.

Challah (Jewish braided egg bread)

This is the most beautiful bread I make. One Easter, a pastor friend asked me to bake several loaves for Communion. What a joyful way to meditate upon the risen Christ! If you have any leftovers, challah makes unforgettable French toast.

¾ c. warm milk

2 Tbs. butter or canola oil (optional)

3 eggs

1 tsp. salt

4 c. unbleached white flour

¼–½ c. oat bran hot cereal, dry/uncooked (optional)

2 Tbs. sugar

2 tsp. fast-rising dry yeast

Mix all ingredients. Knead. Cover and allow to rise in a warm place until double. (Or use “dough only” setting on your bread maker.) Punch down and knead again. Add more flour, if dough feels sticky, then divide dough into halves.

Divide each half into three equal pieces (six total). Roll each piece into a long rope—try to make the ropes about the same length and thickness. Coat two baking sheets with -nonstick spray. Braid three ropes together on each baking sheet. Moisten fingers and seal ends where the three ropes join.

Allow to rise in a warm place, uncovered, until double. Bake at 350° degrees for 12–15 minutes or until the top is golden and the bread sounds hollow when tapped. Do not overcook. If desired, lightly rub top of warm loaves with butter.

Cinnamon Roll

I have absolutely no willpower when it comes to this bread. Fortunately, neither do those around the table, so there are rarely leftovers!

1 c. warm water

1 egg

2 Tbs. canola oil or butter (optional)

1 tsp. salt

3 c. unbleached white flour

$\frac{1}{3}$ c. oat bran hot cereal, dry/uncooked (optional)

3 Tbs. sugar

1 tsp. vanilla extract

2 tsp. active dry yeast

For filling:

2–4 Tbs. soft butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar mixed with 3 Tbs. cinnamon

Mix all ingredients except filling. Knead. Place in greased bowl, cover, and allow to rise until double. (Or use “dough only” setting on your bread maker.) Divide into halves.

Knead again, adding additional flour if too sticky, then roll out on floured surface into two rectangles, about ¾-inch thick. Spread dough with thin coat of soft butter. Sprinkle dough liberally with cinnamon-sugar mixture. Roll long edge into a log.

Place logs on baking sheets that have been coated with nonstick spray. Allow to rise, uncovered, in warm place until double. Bake in preheated oven (350°) for 12–15 minutes or until bread sounds hollow when tapped. Do not overcook. If desired, lightly rub top of logs with butter and sprinkle with additional cinnamon-sugar mixture. Best if served warm, but finger-lickin' good anytime.

Soups

Soup is my go-to meal both for weeknight dinners and for feeding a crowd. These foolproof recipes serve 4–6 (depending on whether you have teenage boys in the household!) but can easily be doubled or tripled. If desired, adapt for (or keep warm in) a slow cooker—so you can prepare earlier in the day and not be frazzled at mealtime.

My Best Mushroom Soup

I have never had this soup turn out less than spectacular. For a special treat, mix in some shiitake or oyster mushrooms with the domestic mushrooms. When we lived in Wilmore, Kentucky, a neighbor grew and sold exotic mushrooms on a small scale and kept me supplied. Talk about local—and fresh!

4 Tbs. butter, divided

1 c. chopped onion

¼ tsp. salt

¾ lb. mushrooms, sliced—use several varieties, if available

1 Tbs. minced fresh dill weed, or 1 tsp. dried

2 c. chicken or vegetable broth, divided

1 Tbs. tamari (or soy) sauce

1 Tbs. sweet Hungarian paprika (or regular paprika)

3 Tbs. all-purpose flour

1 c. milk

2 tsp. lemon juice

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

For garnish: ½ c. sour cream plus extra dill weed

In a medium saucepan, sauté onion in 2 Tbs. butter until translucent. Sprinkle lightly with salt. Add mushrooms, dill weed, ½ c. broth, tamari sauce, and paprika. Cover saucepan and simmer for 15 minutes.

Heat remaining 2 Tbs. butter in a soup pot. Whisk in flour and cook, stirring, until the mixture bubbles. Add milk and whisk vigorously to blend well. Return to moderate heat and continue to whisk until sauce is thickened and smooth, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the mushroom mixture and remaining broth. Cover pot and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes.

Just before serving, add lemon juice, salt, and pepper to taste. Garnish each bowl with a generous spoonful of sour cream and a sprinkle of extra dill weed.

Creamy Potato Soup

This is my richest soup—always a winner. Best served with a simple salad, as opposites attract!

3 Tbs. butter

1 c. chopped onion

1 tsp. minced garlic

2 large potatoes, well scrubbed and coarsely chopped

1 large carrot, chopped

3 c. chicken or vegetable stock

1 tsp. dried dill weed, or 2 tsp. fresh

4 oz. cream cheese

1½ c. milk

1 c. grated sharp cheddar cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

Optional: chopped fresh parsley or chives for garnish

In soup pot, sauté onion and garlic in butter until the onion is translucent. Add potatoes and carrot and sauté for 5 minutes longer. Add stock and dill weed and simmer until all vegetables are tender.

Puree cream cheese and half of vegetable mixture in blender until smooth. Return to soup pot and stir in milk and grated cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish each bowl with fresh parsley or chives, if available—the green adds a welcome burst of color!

For Fish Chowder: Add ½ c. clam juice along with stock, substitute ⅛ tsp. Old Bay Seasoning for the dill, and substitute 2 c. cooked, cubed fish or 1 c. chopped clams for the cheese.

Curried Lentil Soup

I adapted this soup from a curried lentil recipe my friend (and fabulous cook!) Bethany shared with me. Cheap, easy, filling, and delicious—the perfect food quadrilateral! Adjust the seasoning for your family's palate, but if you are expecting guests, err on the side of mild and provide extra hot sauce at the table. Our family prefers Sriracha sauce (a.k.a “rooster sauce,” because of the image on the bottle), which is inexpensive and available at most Asian markets and larger grocery stores. But beware, a tiny dab goes a long way!

1½ c. dried lentils (Brown lentils are okay, but if you can find yellow, orange, or green lentils, they are well worth the extra expense.)

1 bay leaf

1 tsp. sea salt

5 c. chicken or vegetable broth

¼ c. butter

1 large onion, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

¼ tsp. sea salt

1–2 tsp. curry powder (to taste)

2 Tbs. lemon juice

3 c. cooked rice (brown or white), optional

Optional garnishes: hot sauce, grated cheese, and sour cream or plain yogurt

Combine first four ingredients and bring to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes. Remove bay leaf.

While the lentils cook, sauté onion and garlic in butter until translucent, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle with the ¼ tsp. sea salt and add the curry powder. Cook 3 minutes longer. Mix onion mixture and lemon juice into lentils.

For a more filling meal, serve the lentil soup over hot rice. Provide hot sauce, grated cheese, and sour cream or plain yogurt, to add as desired.

Wedding Soup (Italian Meatball Soup with Orzo)

This is one of Matthew's favorite soups and incredibly easy to make! I prepare this for guests only if I know we don't have any vegetarians at the table—it is a very hearty soup and especially filling when extra broth is sopped up with fresh bread.

2 Tbs. butter

¾ c. diced onion

1 c. diced carrots

5 c. chicken broth

1 beef bouillon cube

1 c. dried orzo

30 cooked meatballs, freshly made or frozen

Total of 1 tsp. dried or 2 tsp. fresh Italian herbs (such as basil, oregano, and parsley)

Salt and pepper to taste

½ c. diced spinach or other fresh greens

Optional: grated Parmesan cheese

In a soup pot, sauté onion and carrots in butter until soft, about 10 minutes. Add broth and bouillon cube and continue cooking 10 minutes more.

Meanwhile, in a separate pot, cook orzo according to -package directions until firm, about 6 minutes. When onion and carrots are tender, add meatballs, Italian herbs, and cooked, drained orzo. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Stir in diced greens and cook for one minute longer. Spoon into bowls and offer optional grated Parmesan cheese at the table.

Note: If you plan to have leftovers, add orzo to each bowl rather than to the soup pot. Orzo expands, so it will soak up all the broth overnight.

Tortellini Soup

This recipe is the holy grail for the gourmet in a hurry—an elegant meal, with almost no mess or hassle! When your family and guests compliment you, just say “thank you” and leave it at that.

4 c. (about 3 pkg.) *fresh* wild mushroom tortellini or ravioli (or substitute another favorite fresh tortellini/ravioli, found in the refrigerated pasta section of the grocery store)

5 c. chicken or vegetable broth

4 firm plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped

½ c. five-cheese spaghetti sauce (I prefer Bertolli brand.)

Total of 1 tsp. dried or 2 tsp. fresh Italian herbs (such as basil, oregano, and parsley)

Salt and pepper to taste

Optional garnish: shredded Parmesan cheese and additional fresh, chopped herbs

Mix broth, chopped tomatoes, spaghetti sauce, and herbs in soup pot. Bring to vigorous boil. Add tortellini and cook 4–5 minutes until al dente. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Garnish with fresh herbs, if available, and serve with shredded Parmesan cheese.

Note: Pasta will get mushy if kept in soup stock overnight. However, this recipe is

so simple you can always make a fresh batch!

Cream of Whatever Soup

Consider this soup your chance to be creative with whatever vegetables are in season. Fresh croutons will make this soup a feast: cube some leftover bread and toast in a hot pan with plenty of oil, minced garlic, and chopped parsley. Float croutons on top of soup just before serving.

3 c. broccoli, asparagus, or other in-season vegetable—cooked and drained

3 Tbs. butter

1 tsp. minced garlic

3 Tbs. all-purpose flour

1 c. milk

2 c. chicken or vegetable broth

1½ c. grated Muenster, Swiss, or cheddar cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tsp. dried dill weed or 2 tsp. fresh

Melt butter in soup pot, cook garlic for one minute, then add flour. Stir over medium heat until mixture bubbles. Slowly whisk in milk and broth; cook until sauce thickens, about 10 minutes.

Add grated cheese and stir until melted and smooth. Place cooked vegetable in a blender and add sauce; process to desired consistency. Add salt, pepper, and dill to taste.

If soup is too thick (or you have more mouths to feed), thin with additional milk and/or broth. Serve hot, topped with fresh croutons.

Salads

Salads in our house are inspired by the season—based on what is plentiful in the garden and farmers' market. Be creative! Besides the usual vegetables, consider these toppings to add substance and color to your salads:

Sliced strawberries, diced avocado, and goat cheese (chèvre)

Blueberries and feta cheese

Dried cranberries, blue cheese, and pecans (Clark's favorite)

Mandarin oranges and slivered almonds

Cold (briefly steamed) broccoli and cauliflower -florets and shredded Parmesan

Diced apples (or slightly under-ripe pears), walnuts, and grated extra-sharp cheddar

Cold steamed asparagus tips and grated Gouda or baby Swiss

Golden raisins and cashews

Small cubes of fresh mozzarella and roasted or -sun-dried tomatoes

Drained artichoke hearts (diced), homemade -croutons, and shredded Parmesan

Grilled chicken or salmon. See my favorite marinade below.

Chicken or Salmon Marinade

Mix 1 part canola oil and one part soy sauce. Add salt, -pepper, minced garlic, and dried dill to taste. Marinate chicken or salmon for at least 20 minutes, turning once.

Nancy's Honey Mustard Vinaigrette

I nearly always serve salad with homemade dressing. This is my tried-and-true recipe, but feel free to personalize it with different vinegars and flavorings.

½ c. olive oil

⅓ c. balsamic vinegar

1 tsp. Dijon mustard

1 tsp. honey

½ tsp. dried dill weed

Salt and pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in tightly covered jar and shake well.

