

Hello Food Fans, and welcome to another installment!

We're coming up on an amazing celebration, The Chopping Block's 20th birthday! I've taken some amazing classes with the chopping block and made some incredible food. I've learned to make Lobster Thermidor in Celebrating Julia Child, wonderful Kebobs in Street Food, and Spanish Braised Cod with Chorizo in Seafood 101 to name a few.

Maybe my favorite recipe that comes from a class at The Chopping Block that makes it into my regular rotation is a simple soup from Veterinarian Boot Camp.

Roasted Red Pepper Corn Chowder

Not only is this dish fast and flavorful, it's fun to make. The recipe size here is designed to be an appetizer for 4 to 6 people, but can defiantly be a full meal for 3. It can easily be scaled up for larger groups. It's a little tough to scale down if you want less, but the leftovers freeze well. All in all, cook time is about 30 minutes.

Here's what you'll need:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 leeks, white and tender green sections, diced
- 2 parsnips, peeled and cleaned, diced
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 cup frozen corn
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 roasted red pepper, diced
- pinch nutmeg
- lemon juice to taste
- salt and pepper to taste

When it comes to roasted red pepper, there are a few ways to achieve the process. My preferred method is putting the pepper on a burner in direct contact with the flame. Use tongs to turn the pepper as it cooks until it's competently blackened. Then cover the pepper in plastic wrap or aluminum foil for a minute or two. Its own steam will loosen the skin. Once it's cool enough to touch, peel the charred skin off. This is the fastest way to roast a pepper, and I think it's a lot of fun!

If this process doesn't sound like fun to you, or you have an electric stove, you can also roast red peppers in the oven. Place whole peppers on a baking sheet in your oven. Move an oven rack to the highest position and turn on your broiler. If you have the option, set the broiler to high. Rotate the peppers a few times for even roasting. This should take about 5-10 minutes.

You can also buy roasted red peppers in a jar at the grocery store, and those will do just fine. They're usually next to the jarred olives.

In a large stock pot, over medium heat, add the olive oil. Once the oil is hot, saute the celery, leeks, and parsnips until softened. About 7 minutes.

Then add the flour and saute for another minute, mixing the vegetables well with the flour.

Add the vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes.

When it comes to vegetable stock, homemade is almost always better and will add a nice flavor to the soup. If you have some, I recommend using it. That being said, I almost never have homemade veggie stock, and that's fine. A box of store bought will do a great job. Just be sure to check the ingredients list. You don't want a ton of salt and the ingredients should be words like water and carrots. Anything more complicated than that, and I'd steer clear.

Once the soup has simmered for 20 minutes, your veggies should be soft. Add the corn, cream, nutmeg, and roasted red pepper. Keep the chowder over low heat, and just give it five minutes or so to heat these last ingredients through.

Once the chowder has heated through, season with salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste. Serve and enjoy this warm creamy soup!

Happy Eating!