

‘Simply Delicious’
Recipes
From the old Gypsies
By
Kyra Smith

This is small selection of recipes I have put together from an original manuscript by Gypsy Kyra Smith. It’s a collection of old recipes gathered over the years by her as she travelled the highways and byways of England and Wales. Kyra was born in a horse waggon in Skipton, N. Yorkshire. and lived all her 87 years in one, never once sleeping under a tiled roof, although she did once have the privilege of meeting Queen Mary during a royal visit to Ripon Cathedral. Kyra had a passion for food made from the simplest ingredients and the least amount of preparation. Remember, everything the traveler's ate had to be cooked on the open fire outdoors. Some of the more modern wagon did have a small stove just inside the doorway but these were only big enough to boil a pan of water for tea, etc.

*Published by Petulengro Publications
Granada 18314
Spain*

www.petulengro.com

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Kushti Cauliflower

(Kushti is the Romany word for 'good')

There is nothing to beat a nice fresh cauliflower straight from the earth with its delicious crisp and nutty flavour especially if it still has those beautiful green leaves surrounding the tightly packed pure white flower in the centre. Here are some ever so simple recipes that really do bring out the best in a cauliflower.

Cauliflower & Cheese

Wash and cut the cauliflower into large florets and boil in salted water for about 5 minutes. Do NOT overcook. Then make a nice creamy sauce with

**1 Pint of Milk
1½ oz. Flour
1 tablespoon Butter
Salt (2 good pinches)
Pepper (2 good pinches)**

Whisk all except the butter in a saucepan until all flour is dispersed then add the butter, then over a gentle heat bring up to the boil but you must keep stirring ALL the time. When the sauce thickens cook and stir for a further 2 minutes.

Put cooked cauliflower in an ovenproof dish and cover with the sauce then grate 3 oz. Of a good strong mature cheese over the top and put in the oven or under the grill until the

cheese is golden brown and bubbling. Serve at once either alone or with a main course. Delicious!

Crunchy Cauliflower

This makes an excellent mid-day snack or a tasty supper dish.

Boil the cauliflower as before (not too long, there should still be a little crisp to the bite) Fry about a ounce of fresh breadcrumbs in 3-4 oz. Butter and a couple of tablespoons of chopped almonds or walnuts then pour over the cauliflower and eat at once whilst the butter is still hot and sizzling.

You won't want to share this it's so good.

Continental Cauliflower Ensalada

This is a side salad favoured by the Gypsies in Spain and France and that is so easy to prepare, cut the cauliflower into small florets and blanch in boiling salted water for only about 2-3 minutes then into ice cold water, this stops the cooking process.

To make the dressing you will need

**2 tablespoons Extra Virgin Olive Oil
1 tablespoon wine vinegar
1 garlic clove finely chopped or grated
Salt & Pepper to taste**

Whisk together and allow to stand for 30 minutes then pour over the cauliflower and serve as a side salad or with cold meats etc.

Cauliflower Soup (Simple yet Satisfying)

This is a good way to use up the trimmings from the cauliflower, Stalks, Leaves, etc. Simply boil them then blitz in a food processor. Add some of the boiling liquid and an equal amount of milk, Salt and Pepper a pinch of nutmeg and a generous knob of butter, heat and serve, If you wish you can thicken it slightly with a little plain flour or corn-flour.

This makes an excellent soup just add some crust bread for a real treat.

Dandelion Salad

One thing there is never a shortage of in the summer is Dandelions, in fact most gardeners will tell you they are near impossible to get rid of. A favourite Sunday tea for our family was cold pheasant or partridge and a refreshing Dandelion Salad.

Choose the small young leaves when they are only 2 - 3 inches long, wash and dry well, sprinkle with salt and pepper and a little wine or cider vinegar. Next cut some streaky bacon into small cubes (Smoked is best) and fry until crispy. Just before serving pour the bacon and any fat that has come out of it over the Dandelion leaves and toss.

Believe me, this beats a lettuce salad any day of the week and the leaves are FREE.

Carrot Soup
(A pale orange soup with a delicate flavour)

Take about a pound of old carrots, wash and cut into smallish pieces and simmer them in a large saucepan of water with a small onion and a tablespoon of butter for about 15 minutes. Then add a couple of large potatoes cut up, salt and pepper, a couple of pints of water and simmer for another 30 minutes. Mash the vegetables down to a purée (today you can of course use a food processor) reheat the whole thing adding a good measure of butter just before serving. You can thicken this slightly if you wish with a little plain flour or cornflour.

You can also use this same recipe and substitute Leeks or Celery for the Carrot.

White Stock

Chicken bones or a chicken carcass
Couple sticks of celery
Pinch ground mace or nutmeg
Teaspoon black peppercorns
Small ham bone or ham shank
2 small onions
About 5 pints of water
A bouquet of herbs, fresh if possible
(Bayleaf, thyme, parsley)
If dried are used, ½ teaspoon thyme, parsley, crushed
Bayleaf.

Put bones, shank and water in a large pan, cover and simmer for 2 hours, then add the vegetables and herbs, simmer for a further 3 hours. Then strain through a fine sieve. Do NOT add any salt to your basic stock, this should be added in the final dish.

Note: Today some very good ready-made fresh stocks are available in the supermarkets or there is no reason you couldn't use a stock cube.

Kyra's Handy tip

To prepare onions without tears, peel the onion without removing the root.

Potato Soup

1½ pints of white stock
1 medium sized onion
¼ pint milk or cream
¾ lb peeled potatoes (not new potatoes)
2 sticks celery
Salt & pepper
1 oz butter

Slice the potatoes, onions and celery and gently cook in the butter in a large pan for about 5 minutes, then add the stock and simmer for about half-an-hour.

Rub through a fine sieve, add the milk or cream which should have been warmed and seasoned, finally re-heat and serve with some nice crusty bread and butter.

Lentil Soup

**½ lb lentils
1 small turnip
1 medium onion
Salt & Pepper
3 pints stock or water
1 large carrot
2 sticks celery**

Wash the lentils; soak them in the stock for 12 hours. Place in a pan and bring to the boil and skim off any scum that forms. When boiling add the sliced vegetables and simmer for 2 to 3 hours. Rub through a fine sieve (or blitz) season and re-heat.

You will need to taste before serving, as this needs more salt than other soups.

Kyra's Brisket Braise

**2½ lb unsalted brisket (Rolled)
1½ oz margarine
2 large carrots, sliced
4 oz Swede, cut into small dice
1 whole peeled garlic clove
Freshly milled black pepper
3 tablespoons Whisky
3 level tablespoons flour
1 large onion, peeled and roughly chopped
1 large leek, trimmed, washed and sliced
1 or 2 bay leaves
2 level teaspoons salt
½ pint beef stock (cubes made up with hot water are fine)**

Wash and dry the brisket and coat with flour. Heat margarine in a heavy flameproof pan.

Add the brisket and fry until nice and brown all over; this will seal in the flavour and juices. Remove and put to one side.

Add the remaining flour to the fat in the pan and stir well. (This will form the final thickening in the finished dish)

Fry the vegetables gently until coloured, keeping the lid on to retain moisture. Return the brisket to the pan together with the whole garlic clove. Season and add the stock stirring to blend in the flour/fat mixture from the bottom of the pan. Cover with a tight fitting lid and simmer on a very low heat for about 2 ½ to 3 hours until the meat is quite tender. Remove the brisket and keep warm. Bring the pan containing the cooking juices and vegetables to the boil, reduce a little if necessary remove bayleaves and add the whisky and pour over the sliced meat.

A favoured accompaniment of the travellers is boiled potatoes and some nice lightly cooked brussel sprouts.

Gypsy Pancakes

½ lb Self-raising Flour (or Plain & ¼ teaspoon baking powder)

3 oz Sugar

2 medium eggs

Pinch salt

Beat all ingredients together until it just drops off the spoon, if necessary you can slacken it off with a very tiny drop of milk. (This batter should not be too runny or it will spread in the pan and form very thin pancakes).

Take either a ground bottom frying pan or better still a girdle plate if you have one (cast iron is best) grease well and wipe out any excess fat with paper and drop on a tablespoon of the mixture cook for just one minute or until the bubbles stop bursting then turn over, they should be a light golden brown. Serve hot or cold buttered or with jam.

Girdle Scones

**8 oz plain flour
1teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
Pinch of salt
1½ oz butter
½ - 1 oz sugar
2 oz sultanas
¼ pint milk**

Sieve the flour bicarbonate of soda, cream of tartar and salt, rub in the butter, and add the sugar and sultanas. Now mix to a fairly soft (but not sticky) dough with the milk. Turn onto a floured board and knead very lightly just to remove any cracks.

Roll out to about ½ inch thick, cut into triangles and place on a hot floured girdle or griddle plate. Cook gently until well risen, turn over and cook until the other side is browned and the centre is dry.

Once you have made these a few times you soon get to know exactly how long to cook and at what heat.

Bacon Hock (or ribs) with cabbage

This is something that could be found simmering on an open fire outside nearly every 'Gypsy Wagon' parked down the country lanes of England right up to the late 1950's. An iron pot hanging over the hot ashes of last nights fire containing either a couple of bacon hocks, ham shanks or a sheet of bacon ribs, a few whole carrots and a couple of

