



BARBECUE SOUP AND CORNMEAL DUMPLINGS

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What is the relationship between food, jazz, and American history? In the late 19th and early 20th century, jazz spread into American life, blending many influences and finding distinct forms in each community it was played, from New Orleans to Kansas City to Harlem. Chef Rock Harper joined us to prepare a few dishes from America’s most historic jazz communities as we explored how each city produced unique culinary creations to feed both musicians and their audiences and discussed how the foods that fed jazz are as improvisational, innovative, and rooted in tradition as the music itself.

The heyday of Kansas City jazz was primarily during the Great Depression—while the rest of the country was in economic decline, the jazz clubs at 18th and Vine (along with the many casinos and nightclubs of the district) were hopping with some of the most groundbreaking jazz performances of the century. Musicians had been coming through Kansas City via tours on the vaudeville circuit for decades, but KC locals such as Bennie Moten, Jay McShann, Charlie “Bird” Parker, and their Blue Devils made it a nationwide destination. These musicians relied on cheap eats to keep them going between all-night band battles and early morning jazz breakfasts. A dish called “barbecue soup” was a staple at one of Parker’s favorite spots, the Old Kentucky Bar-B-Q, as it was cheap to prepare, cheap to buy, and satisfying to any hungry musician passing through. Prepared with vegetables, tomato-based barbecue sauce, and whatever scraps of hickory-smoked barbecue were left over from the day before, there are countless variations of this dish across Kansas City.

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Serves 8

Ingredients – For the dumplings

⅔ cup all-purpose flour
⅓ cup fine yellow cornmeal
1½ teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
½ cup buttermilk

Ingredients – For the soup

2 ounces unsalted butter
2 Idaho potatoes, diced
1 large carrot, sliced
1 small bunch of celery, sliced
1 large yellow onion, diced
¼ cup all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
3 quarts beef broth
1 small can (14.5-oz) diced tomatoes
2 tablespoons garlic powder
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon kosher salt

1 tablespoon ground black pepper

2 cups diced leftover barbecue (burnt ends of brisket are traditional, but you can use barbecued chicken, pulled pork, etc.)

Directions

1. Prepare the dumplings: In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, sugar, and salt. Using your fingers, work in the butter until small crumbs form. Stir in the buttermilk and set aside.
2. Prepare the soup: Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat, then add the potatoes, carrots, celery, and onion and sauté until soft, about 5-7 minutes. Dust the vegetables with flour and cook for 2 minutes. Add all other ingredients except the diced meat, then bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, then simmer for 15 minutes. Add the diced meat and let cook for 20 minutes.
3. Drop spoonfuls of the dumpling dough into the soup and cook for another 7-10 minutes. Serve hot.



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