



"I feel like you're just using me."

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Empty bowls fulfilled



Mark Abramson

Milwaukee Empty Bowls patrons will fill their bellies with hearty soup, donate to charities that support meal sites and food pantries and come away with some of these custom-made ceramic bowls.

Soup-filled bowls blend giving and getting

By Jan Uebelherr of the Journal Sentinel

Oct. 5, 2010 | (0) COMMENTS

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Gary Porter

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Making empty bowls

Bring together more than 250 gallons of the best soup in town. Stir in a good cause. Serve in ceramic bowls made by caring hands.

This is Milwaukee Empty Bowls, which is gearing up for its 11th benefit for Milwaukee meal sites and food pantries on Saturday at the MATC Oak Creek campus.

Each year, it serves up a winning recipe that blends giving and getting. For a donation of at least \$20, diners get a bowl to keep and as much soup and bread as they'd like. For many, it is a ritual - the annual chance to add yet another bowl to a collection.

But there are intangibles, too: the sense of community, of filling the bowls of others. Over the years, these bowls have turned soup-eating supporters into volunteers and board members.

"I see the bowl as a universal object - something that, no matter what language you speak, no matter how much money you make, you recognize what it is. And you know that it functions for food," says Jean Wells, a potter who is president of Milwaukee Empty Bowls.

This year, more than 50 local chefs will cook up 5-gallon batches of soup - vegetarian chili, turkey wild rice, minestrone; there will be thick chowders and spicy bisques. New this year: Alterra Coffee. Chef Mike Friedl has dreamed up a spirited seasonal soup called Garam Masala Scented Pumpkin Bisque with Espresso Crema and Tamarind Glazed Pumpkin Seeds (not as complicated as it sounds; see the recipe on page 3G). Alterra is running it as a special in its cafés all week.

Ramie Camarena, a potter who is also the projects and communications coordinator for Alterra, decided it was time Alterra got involved.

"The exciting part for me is working on the bowl end of things," says Camarena, who took part in a

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daylong Bowl-a-Thon event in May.

"I like the idea that it brings together so many aspects - the soup, the artists, a wonderful cause. It's just impressive. People get so excited getting just the right bowl."

As it has in past years, The Gathering, an interfaith meal ministry serving mostly the homeless, will bring a pot of soup to the event that helps feed its program. The meal program that serves 2,000 meals each week will make 5 gallons of its Chicken Vegetable Soup (see the recipe on page **3G**).

Virginia Schrag, executive director of The Gathering, notes that the organization's motto is "People in community feeding the hungry."

The Gathering's Chicken Vegetable Soup is a good example of that.

"The green and red peppers being used are donated by a local vegetable farmer, through a dear man who picks the peppers from the field in the morning and brings them immediately to our downtown site," she says.

That "dear man," Bill Ballbach, had approached Cedarburg farmers Bill and Chris Witte last year when it appeared they were going to plow under their unpicked peppers. "Can I pick them and give them to The Gathering?" Ballbach asked.

Go ahead, the farmer said.

The chickens for the soup come from an allotment provided by the federal government through the Hunger Task Force.

"We do this work communally," Schrag says. "We cannot do it alone. And we build community - volunteers, staff, guests, donors - as we do the work."

The Gathering's cooking team was formed by people who connected through Empty Bowls, Schrag says.

"It's such a colorful and joyful event."

Watching for bowls

Inspired by an event put on by a high school art teacher in Michigan in 1990, Milwaukee Empty Bowls has raised more than \$322,000 since 1999 for meal programs and food pantries. Empty Bowls events are now held across the nation.

In more than a decade, the Milwaukee event has turned out more than 16,000 bowls that were filled with soup before they went home with well-fed diners.

Those beautiful bowls are meant to serve as a reminder, organizers note, that there are always empty bowls in this town.

"A lot of potters see the bowl as a symbol of nourishment, something that we fill and empty throughout our lifetime," says Wells.

Many people return year after year in search of the perfect bowls, Wells says. So zealous were some diners in their quest to collect bowls that organizers had to limit the number of bowls to four per person.

"Some people were coming in and buying 20 bowls," says Wells.

This year's crop of more than 2,000 bowls was handmade by volunteer artists, students and teachers throughout the year.

The big bowl-making event, the Bowl-a-Thon held in May at Murray Hill Pottery Works on the east side, turned out nearly 850 bowls.

"Some people have just tons of bowls," Wells says. "We've been joking that on our 15th anniversary we should do empty plates so people can expand their collection."

Teri Regano, an Empty Bowls diner for seven years, has a collection of more than 20. She always gets the maximum four bowls.

For years, she has been among the diners who watch as thousands of bowls are brought in batches and set out on 15 tables. As bowls are taken and paid for, more bowls are set out.

"There are a lot of people - and I was one of them - that kind of linger as they bring out bowls, because they don't bring every bowl out at once," says Regano, a contributing potter for the last four years who will do pottery demonstrations at this year's Empty Bowls. "A lot of people kind of look for matching bowls. They'll watch to see as they're coming out."

Those who have gone to the event for years also know that many well-known southeast Wisconsin artists contribute, including potters Michael Schael, Eric Nelson and Barbara Heimsch.

Filling more bowls

Six food programs will benefit from this year's event: Agape Community Center; The Cathedral Center; Friedens Community Ministries Inc.; The Gathering of Southeast Wisconsin; Milwaukee Christian Center, and Repairers of the Breach.

A grant committee considers applications and chooses recipients in May, says Wells, the Milwaukee Empty Bowls president.

For these groups, it means they can focus their time and work on feeding people rather than raising money, says Schrag, of The Gathering.

For instance, The Gathering needs to raise \$400,000 a year to do what it does: make and serve 100,000 meals each year at three sites.

"We do get funded from people, foundations and corporations every year, but you just don't know if a corporation is going to respond as they have in the past, so I just never make that assumption," says Schrag. "We don't have an underlying cushion of dollars."

The Gathering hosts a golfing event to raise funds, but it's time-consuming. The staff would rather focus



Alison Sherwood

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on their mission, she says.

"This gives us the dollars without us having to put a whole lot of energy into it," says Schrag.

As the poverty rate has risen in Milwaukee, more pressure is put on such meal sites and food pantries.

As the numbers have grown, the faces of the homeless and hungry have changed, too.

"We've seen a change in the population," says Schrag. "There have been a lot of younger people - males in their 20s and 30s."

And they're seeing more families - mothers, fathers, small children - who just can't make ends meet, according to Marianne Bach, a manager at The Gathering.

"We're seeing more mothers, and mothers and dads, with two, three kids," says Bach. Often they show up at the end of the month, when resources are stretched thinnest.

"We have a high chair that we use if we have to," says Bach. "It seems like more and more, that's being used."

If You Go

What: Empty Bowls Milwaukee

When: 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 9

Where: MATC Oak Creek Campus, 6665 S. Howell Ave.

How much: \$20 minimum donation per bowl (\$10 for bowls made by children)

Information: www.milwaukeeemptybowls.org.

Poverty and hunger in Milwaukee

- Milwaukee was the fourth most impoverished city in American in 2009
- Nearly 4 out of 10 children in Milwaukee was considered poor in 2009
- Statewide, the poverty rate was 12.4% in 2009, up 2%

September 2010 U.S. Census Bureau figures

*** Empty Bowls recipes

Chef Chris Hatleli of Coquette Café will serve up this gently spiced autumn soup.

Black Bean Soup with Pork Makes 8 to 10 servings

- 2 cups dried black beans
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 pounds pork shoulder, diced
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 2 ribs celery, finely diced
- 5 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 ½ tablespoons ground cumin
- 2 tablespoons ground coriander
- 2 ¼ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
- 1 ¼ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper, plus more for seasoning
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ gallon chicken or vegetable stock, plus more to thin soup if needed
- 1 cup bean soaking water
- Sour cream for garnish

Rinse beans and soak overnight in four times their volume of water.

The next day, place a large soup pot over medium heat. Add olive oil, then add pork and brown on all sides. Remove pork and reserve. Add onion, celery and garlic to pot, cover and cook 10 minutes, stirring regularly. Add cumin, coriander, cayenne, 1 tablespoon kosher salt, 1 ¼ teaspoons black pepper and the bay leaves, and cook 2 minutes.

Drain beans, reserving 1 cup of soaking liquid. Add the 1 cup soaking liquid to the pot along with the cooked pork and stock. Simmer until pork is almost falling apart, 30 to 40 minutes.

Add beans and cook, partially covered, about 20 to 30 minutes, until beans are tender but not falling apart. Scoop about one-third of the beans along with some broth to a food processor and process (or scoop into a measuring cup and use an immersion blender). Add back to soup, taste and add salt and pepper as needed. Add stock to thin, if desired. Serve topped with sour cream.



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Kristyna Wentz-Graff

THIS WEEK: Watts Tea Shop Risotto-Stuffed Portobellos

For the first time, Beans and Barley will serve one of its most popular cool weather soups, according to kitchen manager Anne Vaillancourt.

Cream of Turkey Wild Rice Soup Makes 6 to 8 servings

- 1 ½ cups finely diced onions
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 ½ cups finely diced (¼ inch) celery
- 5 ½ cups chicken stock (divided)
- ¾ cup wild rice
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- ¾ cup finely diced red pepper
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 2 cups diced baked turkey (cooked chicken may be substituted)
- 2 cups half-and-half cream
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried sage
- ½ tablespoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg

In a one-gallon pot, sauté onions in oil until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add celery and sauté 2 minutes longer. Add 4 cups chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer.

In a small saucepan, bring remaining 1 ½ cups stock to a boil and cook rice in stock according to package instructions, about 40 minutes. Set aside.

Make roux by melting butter in another small saucepan. Add flour and stir until butter and flour are thoroughly mixed, with no lumps of flour. Cook 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly. Cool slightly.

Add roux to simmering (not boiling) soup base, adding a little at a time, and whisking constantly to avoid lumps. Add red pepper, shredded carrots, cooked turkey or chicken and cooked wild rice. Simmer 10 minutes.

Add the half-and-half, parsley and all the seasonings. Mix thoroughly, heat through and serve.

Anvil Pub and Grille will serve this soup, which tastes a lot like a club sandwich. It's the creation of chef Bryan Taylor. "It is an Anvil favorite and is made once every two weeks or so," says his sister, Michelle Taylor, who works at the restaurant in Cedarburg's historic Cedar Creek Settlement.

The restaurant is located in a restored blacksmith shop.

Barbecue Chicken Club Soup Makes 8 to 10 servings

- 6 tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 to 4 carrots, chopped
- 4 ribs celery, chopped
- 5 medium red potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- ¾ cup flour
- 1 ¼ quarts (5 cups) chicken stock
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) fire-roasted tomatoes (undrained)
- Salt to taste
- Ground black pepper to taste
- Granulated garlic to taste
- Onion powder to taste
- Red pepper flakes to taste
- ¾ cup milk
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- ¾ cup shredded cheddar cheese

2 cups chopped cooked chicken breast (about 14 ounces raw)

½ cup barbecue sauce

4 slices bacon, cooked and chopped

In large pot, melt butter. Sauté onion, carrots, celery, potatoes and minced garlic in melted butter about 8 minutes.

Add flour and stir until well mixed; cook, stirring, about 30 seconds. Add chicken stock, roasted tomatoes and seasonings (salt, pepper, granulated garlic, onion powder and red pepper flakes).

Bring to a boil and simmer a couple of minutes. Add milk and heavy cream. Return to a simmer and cook until vegetables are tender, about 12 to 15 minutes.

Stir in cheddar cheese until it melts. Add chicken, barbecue sauce and bacon. Stir to combine, and serve. (Alternatively, sprinkle bacon pieces on top of each serving of soup.)

Alterra chef Mike Friedl came up with this seasonal soup especially for the Empty Bowls event. The soup is being featured all week in Alterra Cafés.

Garam Masala Scented Pumpkin Bisque with Espresso Crema and Tamarind Glazed Pumpkin Seeds Makes 8 to 10 servings

1 pumpkin (5 to 6 pounds)

¼ cup olive oil

2 teaspoons garam masala spice blend

12 ounces tamarind juice (found in the Hispanic foods section of larger grocery stores; orange juice may be substituted)

4 ounces pumpkin seeds

3 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger

1 teaspoon minced fresh garlic

2 carrots, diced (about 1 cup)

1 Vidalia onion, diced (about 1 cup)

1 tablespoon kosher salt

2 quarts (64 ounces) good-quality vegetable broth (preferably organic)

1 cup plus 1 tablespoon half-and-half or whipping cream (divided)

Salt

3 tablespoons brewed espresso or strong coffee

3 tablespoons sour cream

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cut the top and bottom off the pumpkin and scoop out the seeds with a spoon.

Carefully peel the skin off the pumpkin with a sharp knife. Dice the pumpkin into 1-inch chunks.

In bowl, toss the diced pumpkin with the olive oil and garam masala blend. Spread on a sheet pan and roast in preheated oven about 45 minutes or until soft. Remove from oven. (Leave oven on to toast pumpkin seeds).

While pumpkin roasts, make the glaze for the tamarind-glazed pumpkin seeds. Pour tamarind (or orange) juice into a small saucepan and heat over medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer and reduce to a semi-syrup consistency, about 30 minutes, whisking often.

Once sauce is reduced, remove from heat, add pumpkin seeds and stir to coat. Remove seeds with a slotted spoon and place on a sheet pan in the preheated oven for about 10 to 15 minutes, stirring once or twice during cooking. Remove from oven and let sit at room temperature. (They'll be sticky at first but will harden after a few minutes.)

Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add minced ginger, garlic, carrots, roasted pumpkin and the onion. Sauté until onions begin to turn translucent. Add kosher salt and continue to cook for 2 minutes. Add vegetable broth, cover, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer soup 20 minutes.

With an immersion blender, puree soup until smooth. (If you don't have an immersion blender, carefully puree soup in batches in a blender.)

Add 1 cup of half-and-half or heavy cream.

Season to taste with salt. If soup is too thick for your taste, add a few tablespoons of stock or water.

To make the espresso cream, whisk together 1 tablespoon half-and-half or cream, 3 tablespoons brewed espresso or coffee, and 3 tablespoons sour cream.

Put soup in a bowl and drizzle espresso crema over top. Put a small mound of tamarind-glazed pumpkin seeds on top.

Chef Dale Curley of Larry's Market in Brown Deer will make this simple, rich soup.

Larry's Market Hungarian Mushroom Soup Makes 4 servings

5 tablespoons unsalted butter (divided)
2 medium onions, finely chopped
1 pound fresh button mushrooms, sliced
2 teaspoons dillweed (dried)
2 tablespoons Hungarian paprika
3 cups homemade or canned low-sodium chicken stock (divided)
4 tablespoons flour
2 cups heavy whipping cream
1 cup sour cream
1 ½ teaspoons salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Melt 2 tablespoons butter and sauté onions 3 minutes. Add mushrooms, dill, paprika and ½ cup of the broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes.

In another pan, melt remaining 3 tablespoons butter. Add flour and whisk until well blended. Pour in cream and cook over low heat, stirring until mixture thickens. Stir in remaining 2 ½ cups stock and the mushroom mixture. Cover and simmer 10 minutes. Just before serving, add sour cream, salt and pepper.

A colorful and healthy blend of vegetables and chicken, this soup is made in batches big enough to feed 50. George Neureuther, a cooking team member at The Gathering, helped cut back the recipe for the home cook. It calls for ground basil because a large quantity of it was donated to the Gathering, Neureuther explains. Dried basil may be substituted.

The Gathering Chicken Vegetable Soup Makes about 12 servings

1 whole chicken (3 to 4 pounds), cut up
¾ pound green and red bell peppers, chopped
½ pound carrots, chopped
8 ounces fresh corn kernels
1 large onion, chopped
Additional fresh vegetables (use about ¼ pound of each, up to ¾ pound total)
1 ½ tablespoons chicken base to 2 cups of water
1 tablespoon ground basil
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon salt
¾ teaspoon black pepper
Salt if needed (according to your taste)
2 cups hot cooked rice

In large pot, combine chicken and enough water to cover the chicken entirely. Cover and bring to a boil; after the water starts boiling, reduce heat to allow a gentle boil. Let chicken cook over low heat 90 minutes. Now check the chicken. If the meat is falling off the bone, the chicken is done. If not, continue to boil until chicken is ready. Remove chicken from broth and set aside. When chicken is cool enough to handle, remove meat from bones and shred meat.

Add vegetables and seasonings to broth and simmer another 30 minutes. Then add cooked rice and shredded chicken to soup and heat through.



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