

RECIPE

Erbensuppe

(German Split Pea Soup)

This recipe is based on one that appears in *German Home Cooking* by Dr. August Oetker (Bielefeld, 1963). The addition of a little flour gives the soup a smooth texture, while celery root adds an earthy note.

- 2 **tblsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 **slices bacon, finely chopped**
- 1 **large onion, finely chopped**
- 1 **rib celery, finely chopped**
- 1 **large carrot, peeled and finely chopped**
- 1 **small celery root, peeled and finely chopped**
- Kosher salt, to taste**
- 2 **tblsp. flour**
- 10 **sprigs flat-leaf parsley**
- 8 **sprigs fresh thyme**
- 2 **bay leaves**
- 1 **lb. green split peas, rinsed and drained**
- 2 **large smoked ham hocks (about 2 lbs. total)**
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste**

1. Place oil and bacon in a 6-qt. pot and cook over medium-high heat until crisp, about 6 minutes. Transfer bacon to paper towel with a slotted spoon; set aside. Add onions, celery, carrots, and celery root, season with salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in flour; cook for 3 minutes.

2. Tie parsley, thyme, and bay leaves together with kitchen twine; add to pot with peas, ham hocks, and 7 cups water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until peas are very tender, about 1 hour. Remove from heat. Discard herbs. Transfer hocks to a plate to let cool; pull off and chop the meat; discard fat, skin, and bones. Stir meat into soup, season with salt and pepper, and ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with reserved bacon.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

THE YEAR my family moved to Germany, my dad decided to commemorate our first holiday in the country by booking us on a bus trip into the Taunus Mountains, north of Frankfurt—a daylong adventure that included lunch, dinner, and the chance to chop down our own Christmas tree.

The excursion did not begin auspiciously. Mom, Dad, my three-year-old brother, Casey, and I piled into the trusty Volvo we'd had shipped over from the States, but when Dad turned the key, the engine wouldn't start. We made it to the bus depot in time, but when we tried to board, the driver claimed that we had paid for just one person. After Dad produced our receipt, we were allowed to get on, only to find that passengers were already squeezed in two to a seat. Three uncomfortable hours later, we stopped at a roadside *Gasthaus*, where we were met with cold blood sausage and potatoes. Mom was horrified. Dad nibbled cautiously. My brother and I made do with crackers. Outside, the sky darkened and the temperature dropped.

When we arrived at our destination, things didn't improve. There weren't enough axes. There weren't enough trees. In the end, we had to trudge into the woods to find a worthy specimen. As our legs sank deeper into the snow, Casey and I staved off hunger by sucking on



FARE



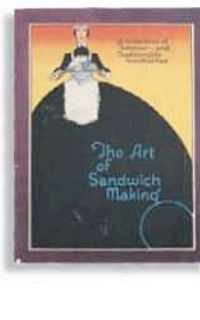
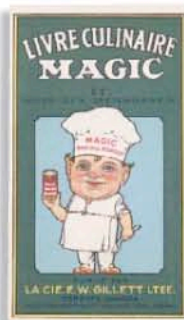
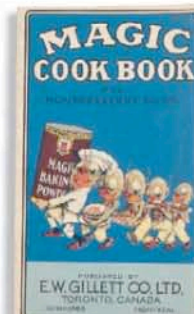
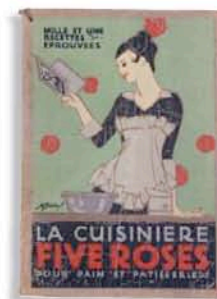
icicles. Finally, Dad spotted a fine six-foot fir, chopped it down, and dragged it back to the bus. Unfortunately, all the roof space had been taken up by other trees, so, with pine needles flying, we had to wrestle our tree on board.

Wet and exhausted, we groaned

when the bus parked in front of the same *Gasthaus* for dinner. But, to our surprise, this time we received a dose of salvation: generous bowls of erbsensuppe. Each steamy, smoky ham-and-vegetable-panade spoonful warmed our bones and revived our spirits.

After a few minutes of silence, my dad started to laugh; soon, my brother followed suit. Maybe it was the erbsensuppe, or maybe my dad knew, then and there, that this was a good Christmas story they could tell and retell for years to come.

—Todd Coleman

**OH, CANADA!**

CANADIAN COOKS, take note: Elizabeth Driver is after the treasures buried in your kitchen drawers. For more than a decade, Driver, a Toronto-based food historian, has been exploring Canada's rural routes and highways, shuttling from research libraries to small-town museums to the dining rooms, attics, and pantries of ordinary homes—

all in the hope of unearthing the ephemera of her country's culinary past. The result of her quest is the new compendium *Culinary Landmarks: A Biography of Canadian Cookbooks 1825–1949* (University of Toronto Press), a 1,257-page encyclopedia that catalogs nearly every cookbook, pamphlet, and community recipe collection printed in Ca-

during the 124 years the book covers.

Lacking the historical authority of French cuisine and the romantic frontier mythos of America's, Canadian food has long been something of a cipher, even for those interested in the subject—which makes Driver's work all the more groundbreaking. "I realized that until we knew what cookbooks had been written and published in Canada and where you could find them, no one could really understand and appreciate the scope and breadth of our history," she explains. Until the mid-20th century, Canada had no national library charged with collecting and recording culinary texts (and unfortunately, the cache that was shipped to the British Library for storage was destroyed by a bomb during World War II), so Driver had to prepare her project from scratch. Indeed, nearly half of the volumes profiled in *Culinary Landmarks* were discovered in private homes. "Cookbooks are the source of a real grassroots kind of knowledge," Driver says, "and it has been protected and saved and valued by ordinary people."

Driver's bibliography, which includes a handful of recipes, in effect traces the evolution of Canada's cuisine and its diverse regional components. Two centuries ago, when British influences dominated Canadian foodways, there was little difference between a cookbook published in Nova Scotia and one published in Alberta. But over time, the combined forces of climate, landscape, and immigration began to shape new Canadian cooking styles. After 1900, the Atlantic provinces could lay claim to such regional gems as Miss Nora E. Smith's scalloped clams (*National Sea Food Recipes*, Nova Scotia, 1923) and Mrs. John Robinson's moose meat pie (*Fredericton Cathedral Organ Fund Cookery Book*, New

Brunswick, 1907), while folks in Winnipeg were savoring fare influenced by the Icelandic, German, and Ukrainian families who settled there.

Other books cited in *Culinary Landmarks* reveal as much about cultural mores as they do about diet and tastes. Take the entry for the *Five Roses Cook Book*, a hugely popular compilation, created by a Montreal-based flour company, that was published, in both English and French, in 1915. Driver reproduces the covers of both editions; the English-language version depicts a wholesome-looking child in mary janes and a toque, while the apparently more libertine Quebecois are treated to a likeness of a slender, chic woman in a revealing French-maid ensemble.

Light reading this is not, but despite the book's sprawling purview, its 2,276 entries perform a remarkable service: they resurrect the legacy of cooks who would otherwise have been lost from the historical record. Open to any chapter, and you find the work of groups of women who got together to raise funds for hospitals, schools, and churches or simply to preserve their kitchen know-how in writing for a new generation of cooks. Even the tiny subarctic mining town of Yellowknife, perched on the northern shore of the Great Slave Lake, had its scribes: the Daughters of the Midnight Sun, who generously shared recipes for bannock and caribou à la mode. There is an intimacy to these glimpses of lives lived long ago and far away. For her part, Driver remains hungry for more knowledge of her country's patriot-cooks. "I can't believe I'm still interested in the subject," Driver says. "But for me, this is the beginning of a story, not the end of it."—*Lea Zeltserman*



SMALL BLESSINGS

A FEW YEARS AGO I INVITED friends over for a holiday featuring kitschy cocktail foods. It had seemed like a good idea at the time, but a few hours before everyone arrived, I panicked that everything I'd prepared, from the sweet-and-sour meatball clam dip with Triscuits, seemed far more ironic than delicious. In a moment of desperation, I ransacked my refrigerator for something else to whip up. I remembered canapés, those dainty toasted white-bread cutouts piled with savory toppings. Although canapés hail from the tradition, they became popular in the States in the 1930s, when can home cooks were masters of creative thrift. With a hodgepodge of everyday ingredients, I made canapés with Roquefort-walnut and anchovy-herb butter, and even a tasty chopped-ham spread with pickle relish. Alas, the retro crab dip went uneaten; the meatballs were sampled, then ignored. But the canapés were such a hit that I've made them for every cocktail party I've hosted since. —*Dana Bowen*

METHOD

Roquefort and Walnut Canapés

This creamy blue cheese spread (pictured above, bottom left) makes a perfect counterpoint to crisp toast. For recipes for the other canapés pictured above, go to SAVEUR.COM/CANAPES. Using a 2" round cookie cutter, cut out 32 circles from sixteen 1/4"-thick white bread slices, preferably Perdue Farm Very Thin Sliced Bread. Brush both sides of each circle with melted unsalted butter and transfer to a baking sheet. Toast bread in a 400° oven, turning once, until light golden, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, beat 8 tbsp. softened unsalted butter, 4 tbsp. softened cream cheese, 1/2 cup brandy, and 1/2 tsp. dried mustard powder in a medium bowl. Stir in 8 oz. crumbled blue cheese, preferably Roquefort. Season with kosher salt. Spread about 1 tbsp. cheese mixture onto each bread circle and garnish with a flat-leaf parsley leaf and a piece of walnut. Makes 32 canapés.