

# The Ultimate Root Soup, Borscht

| SERVES 8 TO 10

You can include parsley root, burdock, and celery root with perfect ease in this *mélange* of sweet root vegetables. Although we sometimes think of roots as dense and heavy, this soup is light, clear, and clean. The recipe makes a lot so that you can eat it over a number of days.

To keep the color of the beets glowing and red, don't add them until the rest of the vegetables have cooked for 15 or 20 minutes.

½ cup (1 ounce) dried porcini  
2 large leeks  
3 or 4 (¾ pound) small russet  
potatoes, peeled  
1¼ pounds beets, peeled  
3 celery ribs  
1 carrot  
finely chopped parsley or dill  
3 bay leaves  
7 garlic cloves, chopped  
sea salt and freshly ground pepper  
1 large onion  
1 turnip, about ½ pound  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
3 cups shredded green cabbage  
1 cup fresh or canned diced tomatoes  
(in puree or water)  
1 tablespoon sugar  
3 tablespoons white or red wine  
vinegar  
½ cup sour cream mixed with  
1 tablespoon prepared  
horseradish

1. Cover the mushrooms with 2 cups warm water and set them aside while you make a vegetable stock. If you prefer to use water, skip to step 3.
2. Wash all the soup vegetables thoroughly since you'll be using the trimmings. These include 4 inches of leeks past the white part plus their roots, if available; potato peels; beet stems and peels; celery tips; carrot ends; and parsley stems. Put the trimmings in a pot with 2 bay leaves, 4 garlic cloves, and 2 teaspoons salt. Cover with 10 cups water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer while you chop the vegetables for the soup.
3. Finely chop the white parts of the leeks. Finely dice the onion. Chop the celery into ½-inch pieces. Dice the carrot into ¼-inch pieces. Peel the turnip and dice into ½-inch pieces. Dice the peeled potatoes. Cut the peeled beets into julienne strips.
4. Melt the butter in a large Dutch oven. Add the leeks, onion, celery, carrot, turnip, potatoes, cabbage, and remaining garlic. Toss with 1 tablespoon salt, cover, and cook over medium heat until the vegetables have wilted, about 20 minutes.
5. Add the beets, tomatoes, remaining bay leaf, and sugar. Chop the soaked mushrooms and add them, along with their soaking liquid, to the pot. Strain the stock, then add it (or 2 quarts water) and simmer until the beets are tender, about 25 minutes. Taste for salt and season with pepper. Stir in the vinegar. Serve hot or cold, with a spoonful of sour cream and horseradish in each bowl and a scattering of fresh green parsley or dill.