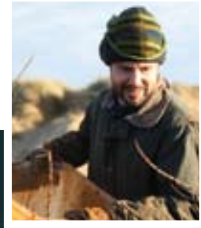


# Wild winters require steaming soups

**Fergus Drennan** takes us into a cold, wintry landscape – but don't worry. A reviving, warming broth is bubbling away in his country kitchen!



**S**oups are wonderful at any time of the year, not only during the winter months. Nevertheless, it's certainly true to say that their deliciously reviving warmth is more than welcome when you've been brave enough to venture out and gather the ingredients. I thought that an interesting exercise would be to make a range of soups to incorporate fruit (rosehips), roots (Alexanders), greens (cleavers), seaweed and fungi.



## Spicy rosehip and beetroot soup

Several years ago I made 60 portions of rosehip soup following a traditional Swedish recipe. It was disgusting! However, determined not to give up on rosehips in soup, I came up with the following recipe which works really well. Honestly, it's delicious! The hips can be gathered as late as February – but don't pick those which taste as though they're fermenting.

**Makes two generous portions**

- 250g (1 large) chopped onion
- 250g (½ lb) peeled and sliced raw beetroot
- 250g (½ lb) whole, frost-softened rosehips
- 1 large finely sliced clove of garlic
- ½ chopped green chilli (5g)
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1-2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- A small piece finely chopped fresh ginger (3g/⅙th oz)
- 900 ml (1½ pts) water
- 2 tsp vegetable stock powder
- 1 tbsp natural yoghurt
- A large pinch of sea salt
- ½ tsp coarsely ground black pepper

**METHOD**

Gently wash and then boil the rosehips in the water for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat, mash thoroughly with a potato masher and set aside to cool for 15 minutes. In the meantime, and using another pan, gently fry the onion, beetroot, chilli, garlic and ginger in the olive oil for 5 minutes, stirring continuously.

Strain the rosehips through a fine cloth, squeezing out as much liquid as possible, and discard the solids. Add the rosehip extraction to the onions and beetroot together with the vegetable stock powder, salt, pepper and red wine vinegar. Simmer for 15 minutes and liquidise to a smooth but still slightly granular consistency. Reheat the soup and serve, swirling in a spoonful of natural yoghurt at the last minute.

## Creamy Alexanders and celeriac soup

**Serves four**

- 250g (½ lb) scraped and sliced Alexanders root
- 250g (½ lb) peeled and finely chopped celeriac
- 200g (7oz) sliced white Alexanders stem (1st inch or so above the root)
- 200g (7oz) sliced white onion
- 200g (7oz) peeled, cored and chopped Bramley apple
- 1.1L (2 pts) hot vegetable stock
- 200ml (7fl oz) single cream
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Alexanders has taken over coastal areas – especially in the South. (It was first introduced by the Romans.) The root is deliciously pungent. If you can't get permission to dig the root – or can't be bothered, use extra stem in the recipe instead.

**METHOD**

In a large saucepan gently fry the Alexanders root, stem, celeriac and onion for 5 minutes stirring continuously. Then add all the vegetable stock, the chopped apple and seasoning. Return to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Liquidise until smooth, together with the cream. Check seasoning, reheat and serve with croutons and finely chopped parsley.







## Cleavers soup

Cleavers can be gathered for soup from November through to April – later it becomes bitter. This basic recipe can be adapted for any greens: chickweed, winter cress, sorrel etc

### Serves 2-3

150g (5oz) cleavers tops (1st inch or two)  
200g (7oz) potato  
150g (5oz) leek  
200g (1 medium sized) onion  
1 garlic clove  
1.1L (2pt) vegetable stock  
Salt and pepper

### METHOD

Finely chop the leek, potato, onion and garlic. Simmer in the stock for 15 minutes, before adding the chopped cleavers and simmering for another 10 minutes. Season and liquidise.

Gather the seaweed from a clean beach and experiment with different varieties. I love the squash in this recipe. They can be quite sweet, so it's almost like having a main course and dessert rolled into one.

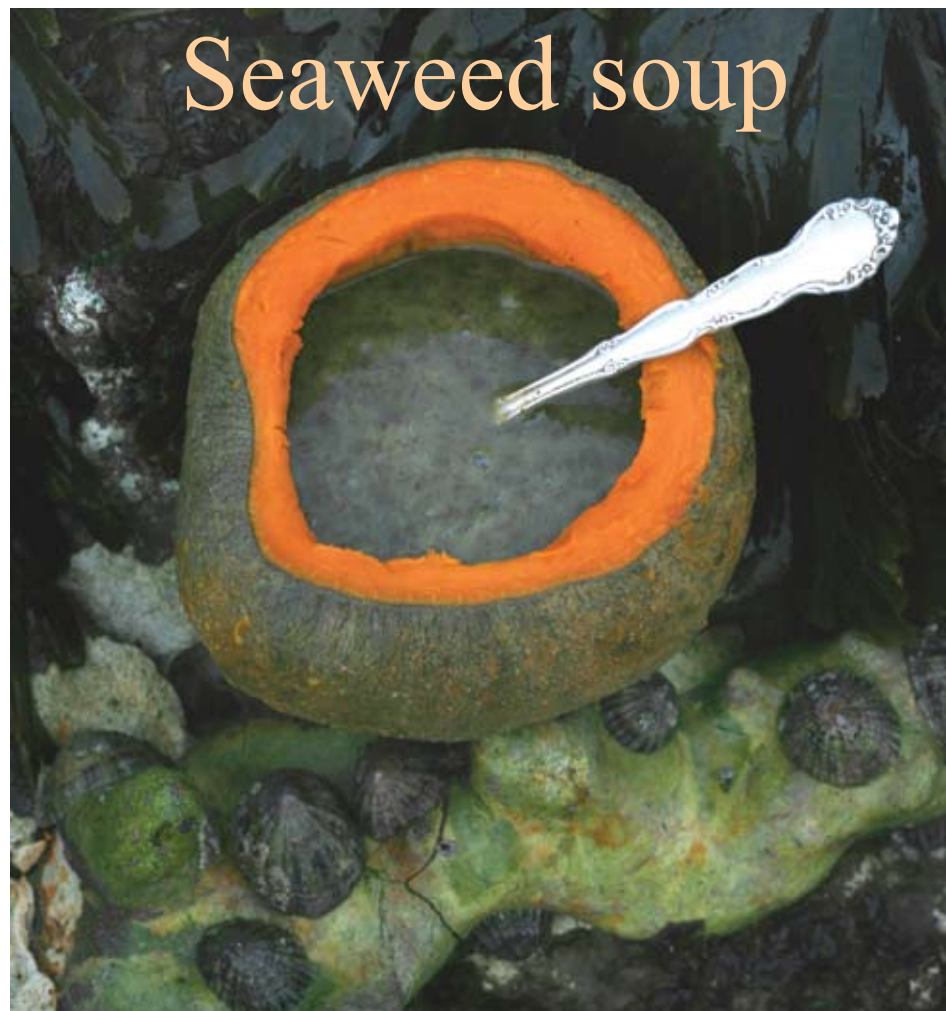
### Makes 2 large portions

1 soup bowl sized winter squash per person (Buttercup, Blue Ballet or Crown Prince squash)  
3 large handfuls of laver seaweed (*Porphyra umbilicalis*)  
1 handful of sea lettuce (*Ulva lactuca*)  
1 handful of dulse (*Rhodomenia palmate*)  
1 strand of Tangle weed (*Laminaria digitata*)  
1 large onion  
900 ml (1½ pts) vegetable stock  
2-3 fresh jelly ear fungus per person (optional)  
Salt and pepper

### METHOD

Wash the seaweed in several changes of water to remove any sand. Cut the top off the squash, scoop out seeds, replace top and bake until tender – usually about 30 minutes at 180°C/350°F/gas 4. In the meantime place the seaweeds in the stock pan and boil for 30 minutes.

Take out the Tangle weed and cut into very fine strips. Liquidise the rest of the soup and return to the pan. Add the seasoning, Tangle weed strips and jelly ears and simmer for another 5 minutes. Pour into the baked squashes and serve.



## Seaweed soup

## Yellow and Blue Leg wild mushroom soup

Both of these mushrooms do well after the first frosts – although, for the yellow legs, it's more a case of tolerating the frost. Yellow legs can be collected from pine or mixed woodland from October until late into January in most years. Field blewits can be found in parks, gardens and meadows from late October through to March. Both can often be found in very large numbers.

### Serves 4

3 tbspn olive oil  
200g (a medium sized) onion, sliced  
2 cloves garlic crushed  
1 small potato, peeled and chopped  
150g Yellow legs/Winter Chanterelles (*Cantharellus tubaeformis*), whole  
A handful of Yellow Legs to garnish  
150g Blue Legs/Field Blewits (*Lepista savea*), sliced  
600ml (1pt) vegetable stock  
300ml (½ pt) milk  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons freshly chopped garlic chives

### METHOD

Gently fry the onions, potato and garlic in a large saucepan for 5 minutes stirring continuously. Add the mushrooms and fry for another few minutes. Pour in the stock and milk, bring to a simmer and continue simmering for 20 minutes. Add seasoning. Liquidise until smooth. Fry the remaining Yellow Legs, scatter on each bowl of soup and sprinkle with the chives.

