

Souped-Up

Faye Michelson



The Salvation Army *Warcry*, vol 129, no. 25, June 26, 2010, Australia,. Used with permission.

A hot bowl of soup can warm your body and soul.

What better way is there to stave off winter's chills than with a hearty soup?

French masterchef Louis P. De Gouy describes it like this: 'Good soup is one of the prime ingredients of good living. For soup can do more to lift the spirits and stimulate the appetite than any other one dish'.

Louis obviously knew what he was talking about. In 1949 he published *The Soup Book*, which could be something of an eye-opener for those of us whose experience of soup is thick veggie, canned tomato, or maybe a tom yum.

The chef, who served in the courts of Austria and Belgium in the early part of the 20th century, gives recipes for almost 800 soups. Sixty-one hot consommés, 106 cream soups, the same number of chowders, 65 chilled and jellied versions, and 33 bisques—the list goes on.

Soup recipes have been around for centuries. *The Forme of Cury*, compiled about 1390 by Richard II's master cooks, provides several recipes for soups and potages to pour over toasted bread. In 1660, British chef Robert May included potages and 'soops' in *The Accomplisht Cook* or *The Art and Mystery of Cookery*. Among his recipes were special broths to nourish the sick—and what is more soothing than a chicken soup when you're feeling under the weather?

Soup has been an integral ingredient of the Salvos' philosophy of caring for people physically as well as spiritually.

The early Salvation Army based its ministry on the three 'S's—'soup, soap and salvation', generously proffering all three from its beginnings in London's slums, and from the day the first Salvos arrived in colonial Australia. More than a century later the Salvos are still dispensing healthy food to those in need.

But back to Louis P De Gouy's quote about soup being 'a prime ingredient of good living'.

Soup is usually viewed as a cost effective food option—unless you have a craving for a soup known as 'Monk Jumps Over the Wall'.

Generally acknowledged as the world's most expensive soup, this centuries-old southern Chinese soup (so named because even vegetarian Buddhist monks were apparently tempted to sneak out of their monasteries to eat it), is made from costly abalone, quail eggs and shark fin, sea cucumber and Chinese black mushrooms. Taking several days to make, it is valued for its medicinal properties.

Feel tempted to try it? Not me. At about \$180 a bowl, you'd be forgiven if your hand shook a little nervously while carrying the soup spoon to your mouth, and that would be a pretty pricey stain down your shirt.

It's enough to take your appetite away.