



Cooking Corner: A Cozy Autumn Meal

Oh, the weather outside is frightful...but we've got a few suggestions for a warming, fall-inspired Halloween meal, so cozy up and dig in. Double the soup recipe, for leftovers that make an easy, tasty lunch. And set a block of locally-produced cheese on the table, to round out your supper.

For the main course, try this [simple vegetarian soup](#). It calls for swiss chard, but any greens will work. Kale, collards, spinach, arugula, mustard greens, turnip greens, beet greens...really! Use whatever greens you can find in your freezer or the farmer's market! Add tender greens right before serving. Tougher greens like kale and collards may need a couple extra minutes of cooking time.

Pick up the onions, garlic, and carrots at the farmer's market. Now is a great time to use your own canned or frozen tomatoes, carefully preserved in warmer times!

The recipe calls for pearl barley but go ahead and use any type – just keep cooking until tender. In our opinion, chewy, wholesome barley is an underused grain. [More and more studies](#) are pointing to arsenic contamination, especially in US-grown and brown rice. Barley can make a good rice alternative (although it does contain gluten).

Here's a recipe for a lovely [cornbread](#), to accompany the soup. It's great for a weeknight as it's quick to mix up and bake – this recipe is only in the oven for 20 minutes. This is a buttermilk cornbread, but if you haven't got any buttermilk on hand, add a tablespoon or so of vinegar to milk and let it sit for a few minutes. Voila! Homemade buttermilk. Also, try substituting polenta cornmeal for regular cornmeal, as it gives the final product an interesting, light texture.

Finally, bump up the evening's coziness factor with a simmering pot of [mulled cider](#)! We can't think of a drink that feels more like fall. To find some local apple cider (and any of the other ingredients you need), check the [Citiparks farmer's markets](#) (open through the Wed. before Thanksgiving), the [Pittsburgh Public Market](#), [Marty's Market](#), [Penn's Corner Farm Alliance](#), the [East End Food Co-op](#), or [Whole Foods](#). It is really worth seeking out the local stuff, for the most tasty, satisfying meal!

