

Strategies Applied

First of all, this soup freezes beautifully. I always make extra and freeze for another time. The sautéed corn, sweet potato, celery and pepper actually make a gorgeous side dish and sometimes I'll double that and freeze some of it (short-term) with or without the addition of wild rice.

There are several other ingredients in this soup that can be made ahead, or used in a left over state: sweet potatoes (if you're making this after a holiday where you're serving a casserole, purchase a bit extra.) Corn - if you're serving corn and have some left over, use it in this casserole.

- **Wild Rice:** Look for it on sale around Christmas and Thanksgiving. If you don't live "up North" request it if you visitors from there- the price difference is amazing in different parts of the country, although it's more widely available in the past few years with the advent of commercial wild rice. I'll cook up the whole box or bag at once, then ziplock and freeze. It's really easy, then, to make my own rice blends, add to vegetables, waffles, bread, etc. Dry, wild rice keeps nearly forever in your pantry, too, so don't be afraid to pick up a larger bag if it's on sale. Cost \$1.40
- You'll also find different grades of wild rice: the perfect whole grains are more expensive, and quite elegant, but don't have any more flavor than the lesser grades that perhaps have some broken grains. If perfect isn't your goal, get the cheaper stuff! By the way, there is often left over liquid when cooking wild rice. I save this and use it as a part of the stock when I make a deep, earthy soup like [Beef Barley](#). I usually end up with about a cup or two - I reduce it down to 1/2 cup and label and freeze - with a note saying how much water is needed to bring it back to the original amount. If you have leftover wild rice from a holiday dinner, it would be wonderful in this dish.
- **Smoked Turkey:** See my notes in the recipe. I often think about this soup if I'm smoking a turkey and set some aside. If I'm smoking anything else, it's worthwhile to throw on a nice bone in chicken breast (which can be frozen after smoking) to use in this soup. I often use just plain old leftover turkey or chicken in this recipe and add a touch of Liquid Smoke. Not sure how to calculate that cost, so I'll guess 35 cents since my turkey was 68 cents a pound. I used about 8 ounces.
- **Parsnips:** They add a bit of a sharp bite, and really are dirt cheap, like most of the root vegetables. I wouldn't leave them out for the world. 40 cents. If you haven't cooked with parsnips, this is a great "starter" recipe.
- **Potatoes:** Potatoes are dirt cheap - look for a great sales price of \$1.99 for 10 pounds in the fall and winter; regular sales price is \$1.99 for five pounds in my area. Store in a cool dry area, not near your onions - I like to store in a loosely closed paper bag. Don't know what to do with a large bag? Make what recipes you'd like to, then make [Freezer Twice Baked Potatoes](#) with the rest. I often pick out the smaller, misshaped potatoes for mashing and save the more regular sized ones for baking or other recipes. Cost for this recipe: 10 cents.
- **Onion:** They keep well, so try to buy on sale. Aldi's is a good place to find reasonably priced onions. Always less expensive in the fall/winter months, the pricing in my area runs from 33 to

66 cents a pound. Store them in a dark, cool place but not near potatoes. If you've bought too many onions, don't let them go bad.

- Slice or dice them, saute and portion into ziplocs labeled "onions" and freeze. You've just saved yourself a step for next time you make a dish. If you have enough, consider making [French Onion Soup](#). If you use half an onion, consider if you can sauté the rest and put it in a Ziploc in the freezer. If not store in the door where you'll see it when you're cooking next. One onion (at 56 cents a pound) about 17 cents.
- **Garlic:** I look for a price of about \$2.99 a pound, or about 54 cents a head. Check the pricing of the bulk per pound as opposed to the packaged. I never really find it on sale, but I use so much, I pay attention and buy a bit more when I see the price is lower. Cost for 2 cloves, around 3 cents.
- **Jalapeno:** They can vary widely in price per pound. Luckily they're small - cost 23 cents.
- **Chicken Stock:** If you read me regularly, I make my own with scraps of vegetables and bones – here's the basic recipe I use for [Best Turkey or Chicken Stock](#) - it's not particular and though it simmers for a long time, the burner is barely on – I just count it as free.
- **Butter:** A bit of a splurge, cost and calorie wise – but for taste and health, I'd rather use real butter than trans fat laden margarine or oils. Yes – they do have trans fat, even if the label says they don't. Harvard, for instance, says unequivocally: "*The key to a healthy diet is to substitute good fats for bad fats and to avoid trans fat.*" While butter isn't a healthy fat, many feel that trans fat is worse than saturated. Buy on deep specials, often around the holidays with store coupons. I shoot for \$2.50 a pound and freeze, where it stays fine for months. Cost for this recipe: 2 tablespoons, 16 cents.
- **Bell Pepper:** There are two types of sales, per pound or per pepper. I usually look for the per pepper pricing; in my area it's generally cheaper – I'll then buy the biggest, most gorgeous ones I can find. The peppers are often bagged and sold by a unit price, too. A really good price in our area is about a fifty to seventy cents a pepper for the red, yellow or orange ones, and 40 to 75 cents for the green bell. 1/2 a pepper, 48 cents.
- **Sweet potato:** Seasonal now in the fall, they drop in price drastically before Thanksgiving. They run between 49 at a low, and up, with a good sales price of about 69 cents a pound. I used about 1/2 cup, so the cost for this recipe is 35 cents. If you have leftover sweet potato, you could add it instead if it's not too soft; go ahead and saute it for the nice char. Maybe if you're making a sweet potato casserole for Thanksgiving, you'll just want to set aside a bit of sweet potato for this dish.
- **Celery:** generally inexpensive, but does go on sale from time to time, so I buy extra when it does. Celery keeps so well, there's no reason to not buy when it's not on sale. Remember to use your leaves, they're full of flavor, and if you don't use them in your cooking, save them, along with the bottom parts for soup or stock. Always wash your celery extremely well. To keep longer, slip a plastic bag loosely over the exposed top of the celery. A good price in my area is 98 cents a sleeve, with about 15 or so stalks in a sleeve. Cost for this dish: 8 cents.
- **Corn:** Fresh corn is best in the summer, when sales run around 17 to 20 cents an ear, but in the

winter frozen is reasonable. Buy on sale with a coupon - mine was free, but 30 cents a pound is not unreasonable. Cost 0. Left over corn will be just fine if you have it.

- **Milk:** About \$2.50 a gallon in my area on sale, the cost for this recipe runs about 18 cents. Buy on sale – unopened it keeps a bit past it’s “sale by” date – then you can pick up one for the beginning of the week, and another at the end of the week for the week following. Be careful with your milk, and even opened it will last a lot longer – pour, lid and put away, don’t bring it to the table or leave it on the counter while you eat dinner or down your cereal and you’ll notice it stay fresh last MUCH longer. We’ve cut way back on dairy, as most health experts suggest – putting it away helps with that, too. Cost for 1/2 cup, about 8 cents.
- **Worcestershire sauce,** to taste - last bought at \$.79, but I often purchase for free, with a coupon and a good sale during the summer months. Many condiments reach an all time low during the summer sales (and during Super Bowl week) and are often pennies or no cost with sales and coupons. Even if you have to pay for the sauce, the cost is negligible.