

# PAIR UP

with Maria Terry



## October 2018 – Hoppy Halloween

October is one of my favorite months in Northern California. I call it “open-window” weather -- neither air-conditioning nor heating required. It is also ideal weather for cracking open a cold beer, trick-or-treating without heavy coats, and enjoying a warm pot of soup with neighbors, friends, and family.

Halloween day can be fraught with last-minute costume decisions and a rush to have everything ready for trick-or-treaters. With so much to do, this is the perfect meal to make ahead. Pub cheese is a delicious blend of cheddar and cream cheese spiked with beer, horseradish, and cayenne. It can be made with, and goes with, just about any beer. I recommend a dry Irish stout like Guinness Extra Stout. The original Guinness Extra Stout is made from roasted barley. This gives it a dark color and caramelized flavor. Its thick, creamy head mimics the creamy dip, and the bubbles cleanse your palate after each bite.

Another great beer recipe is Potato Beer Soup. If you start the soup ahead of time, set aside the reduced beer, potato, carrots, celery, and leeks portion from the other liquids. Then put them all together and warm the soup before serving. A Pilsner beer like Beck’s, Amstel, and Stella Artois is dry and crisp and would be delightful with this soup. The bitter hops offset the sweet carrots and echo the bitter leeks. And, again, the bubbles in the beer refresh the palate after the fatty bacon and creamy potato base.

There is always a lot of candy around on Halloween night, but consider leaving it for the kids and picking up some kettle corn to enjoy with a Belgian Dubbel Ale at the end of the meal. The sweet caramel flavor of the corn complements the yeasty flavors in the

beer, and the sugar balances the bitterness of the hops. The salt brings it all together.

So, go on. Pair Up!

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## Pub Cheese

### INGREDIENTS

8 ounces of good Cheddar, shredded  
1/2 cup cream cheese, softened  
About 1/2 cup beer (hold out about two tablespoons and then add if it needs to be creamier, or add even more if you’d like it to be more a dip than a spread)  
1 tablespoon roughly chopped parsley  
1 1/2 teaspoons white Worcestershire  
1 1/2 teaspoons horseradish  
1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon cayenne  
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt (add to taste after everything is mixed)

### DIRECTIONS

Process all ingredients in a food processor, stopping once or twice to scrape the bottom and sides. Process for two or three minutes until dip is very smooth and creamy.

Rest for about 20 minutes in the fridge to blend flavors before serving. Dip will firm up with refrigeration, so if you refrigerate longer, take it out ahead of time so it’s spreadable.

Garnish with chives and serve with soft pretzels, pumpernickel bread, apples, crackers, or fresh vegetables. It will keep for about a week and freezes well.

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Yield: 3-4 cups

## Potato and Beer Soup

### INGREDIENTS

4 cups chicken stock  
3 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut into  
1/2-inch cubes (about 4 cups)  
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard  
2 bay leaves  
8 ounces sliced smoked bacon  
2 carrots, 1/2-inch dice (about 1 cup)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
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3 stalks celery, 1/2-inch dice (about 1 cup)  
1 small bundle fresh thyme, tied together  
with kitchen twine  
1 leek, white part only, 1/2-inch dice (about  
1 cup)  
1 cup light German beer such as Pilsner  
1/4 cup sliced fresh chives

### DIRECTIONS

Combine 2 cups of the chicken stock and one-third of the potatoes in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer until fork-tender, 15 to 18 minutes. Stir in the mustard to combine, and then blend to a smooth puree using an immersion or regular blender.

Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a large Dutch oven or stockpot over medium heat until crispy and most of the fat has been rendered, 12 to 15 minutes, and then transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate to drain. Pour out the bacon fat, reserving 3 tablespoons in the pot.

Turn the heat up to medium-high and add the carrots. Sprinkle with salt and pepper

and cook for 3 minutes, and then add the remaining potatoes, celery, bay leaves, leeks and thyme and season with salt and pepper. Cook until the leeks are soft, 4 minutes, and then pour in the beer and bring to a boil until the beer has cooked down to about 2 tablespoons, 2 to 4 minutes. Pour in the remaining chicken stock and the reserved potato puree. Stir to combine and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook uncovered until the vegetables are just tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

To serve, ladle the soup into bowls. Crumble the reserved bacon on top and garnish with the chives.

Yield: 4-6 servings