

Comfort Cuisine

P. Allen Smith Shares his Favorite Southern-Style Recipes in his New Cookbook, *P. Allen Smith's Seasonal Recipes from the Garden*

I don't know about you, but when it's cold outside and conditions for working in the garden are less than desirable, I can't think of a better way to kick back and relax than with a nice soup and sandwich combo. Roasted red pepper soup is smooth and rich. Sometimes I like to add a dollop of sour cream just before serving to give it that ex-

tra kick. The grilled ham and smoked cheddar sandwich is my take on every kid's favorite, with grilled pineapple slices, green onions and chutney taking this classic to a whole new level. And if you just want to enjoy a big bowl of soup on a cold evening, the corn sticks are the ideal accompaniment for a wonderful winter meal.

Reprinted from the book *P. Allen Smith's Seasonal Recipes from the Garden* by P. Allen Smith. Copyright © 2010 by P. Allen Smith. Photographs copyright © 2010 by Ben Fink. Published by Clarkson Potter, a division of Random House, Inc.



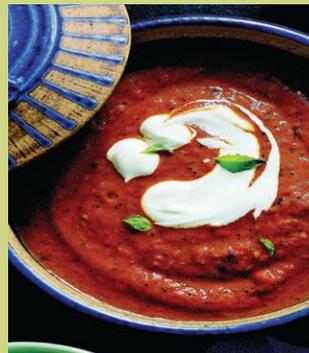
Corn Sticks (Makes 12 sticks)



- 1½ cups white cornmeal
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1¾ cups buttermilk
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tablespoons bacon drippings, melted

Place two corn stick pans on the center rack and preheat the oven to 425°F. In a medium bowl, mix together the cornmeal, flour, salt, and baking soda. Stir in the buttermilk and egg. Remove the hot pans from the oven and brush each mold with about ½ teaspoon of the melted bacon drippings. Return the pans to the oven for approximately 2 minutes, or until the drippings are very hot. Remove the pans once again and spoon the cornbread batter into the molds, filling them about three-quarters full. Bake for 18 to 22 minutes, or until golden brown. Immediately remove the corn sticks from the pans, and place them in a bread basket to serve.

Roasted Red Pepper Soup (Serves 6)



- 3 to 4 red bell peppers (about 1½ pounds)
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling on the peppers
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ pounds ripe tomatoes, or 2 cups canned diced tomatoes with their juice
- 1 red onion
- 3 garlic cloves
- ½ dried red chile
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 4 cups good chicken or vegetable broth
- Sour cream (optional)
- Fresh basil leaves, chopped

Preheat the broiler to high. Cut the bell peppers in half, and remove the seeds and ribs. Lay the peppers, skin side up, on a baking sheet and drizzle them with olive oil; then season them with 1½ teaspoons salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Broil for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the peppers are charred. Carefully remove the peppers from the oven. Place them in a glass bowl, cover it tightly with plastic wrap, and let the peppers steam for about 20 minutes. (This will allow the skin to peel off the pepper flesh easily.) Once the peppers are cool, peel off the charred skin. Set the roasted peppers aside. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut the tomatoes in half, and roughly chop the onion, garlic, and chile. Put the vegetables in a baking pan. In a small bowl, mix the vinegar and oil together; pour this over the vegetables, making sure everything is well coated. Roast the vegetables in the oven, turning them from time to time, for 45 minutes. Transfer the roasted vegetables to a food processor. Add the red peppers and some of the broth, and pulse until pureed. Thin the soup to the consistency you want with the remaining broth, and season it with salt and pepper to taste. If you will be serving it immediately, warm the soup for a few minutes in a saucepan. Or put it in the fridge to cool before reheating and serving later. To serve, add a dollop of sour cream, if desired, and some chopped basil leaves.

Grilled Ham and Smoked Cheddar Sandwich (Serves 6)

- 12 slices artisanal bread of your choice
- Dijon mustard, to taste
- 1½ pounds thinly sliced peppered ham
- 24 slices canned pineapple, grilled
- 4 green onions, white and green parts, chopped
- 12 ounces smoked cheddar cheese, sliced or grated
- 1 jar Major Grey's Chutney (or other favorite)
- Butter or light olive oil spray



For each sandwich, spread one slice of bread with Dijon mustard and then stack it with peppered ham, grilled pineapple, green onions, and smoked cheddar cheese. Spread the top slice of bread with a generous portion of chutney, and place it on the sandwich. Preheat a cast-iron skillet or griddle over medium-high heat. Butter the outsides of the sandwiches (or spray them with light olive oil), and grill them in the hot skillet until golden brown on both sides, about 6 to 8 minutes total. Cut the sandwiches in half and serve while still warm.