

# JAY's WINTER CHICKEN SOUP

*Excerpted with permission from the book, 52 Things Wives Need from Their Husbands, by Jay Payleitner. © 2011 by Jay K. Payleitner. Published by Harvest House Publishers*

## Notes from Jay:

The days are gone when wives planned, shopped, cooked, and served 365 suppers at home per year. Every family is different, but I'm going to assume that in your home that number is still somewhere close to 200. Pizza delivery, Chinese carryout, Colonel chicken, McDs, nicer restaurants, holidays, skipped meals, sports banquets, tailgating, weddings, and dinner at grandma's account for the other evenings.

You may try to take credit for the days that you play grill master, but please don't. Chances are your bride arranged for the buns, side dishes, relishes, and condiments. All you did was burn the burgers or undercook the pork chops giving everyone a fun salmonella scare.

After 30 years of marriage, I am stunned to consider that my wife Rita may very well have called the kids and me to the table some 6000 times. That's a lot of spaghetti, pot roasts, baked tilapia, stir fry, tacos, and tuna casserole.

That's also a lot of me saying, "Great dinner. Thanks, love." But somehow, that doesn't quite seem like enough. Which is why guys need a strategy and a go-to recipe that allows us – once every few weeks – to be hero for the day. Here's the plan . . .

First, pick an evening or afternoon that your wife looks a little haggard. (Don't tell her she looks haggard. Trust me, that would be totally counter-productive.) Also, make sure she isn't already defrosting something. Then, off-handedly say, "Hey, can I make dinner tonight?" Her response might be a quizzical look, an enthusiastic cheer, an outright guffaw, or a sarcastic verbal response. Something like, "Wow, that would be great. What are we having? Toast?" With the recipe below you can honestly and casually say, "I have something a little more satisfying and nutritious in mind, but thanks for the vote of confidence."

Then, go shopping. Check to see if you already have potatoes, an onion, or anything else on the list. But don't involve your wife too much. If she has to get up from her comfy chair five times to look for veggies, find a big pot, point you to the spice cabinet, or show you how to turn on the stove, you're totally defeating the purpose.

Here's the recipe. I hope you can take it from here.

## **Jay's Winter Chicken Soup — RECIPE**

### GAME PARTS:

- One of those hot, pre-cooked chickens popular now in supermarket delis for about \$6.99.
- A can of chicken broth or five or six chicken bullion cubes
- A half bag of those small carrots with the rounded edges
- Two big potatoes or four small potatoes (rinsed)

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- An onion
- A couple stalks of celery, if you like
- A nice handful of egg noodles (not as many as you think, because they expand like crazy as they cook)
- A few good dashes of garlic powder or one of those Italian seasoning blends that include basil, oregano, parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme
- A few cups of water
- A nice, fresh warm loaf of French or Italian bread from the same supermarket. (The kind that comes in the long, white paper bag)

## GAME PLAN:

- At home, wash your hands, plop the bird on a cutting board, and start pulling off chunks of meat. Cut the chicken pieces, carrots, onion, potatoes and celery into pieces. Any size works. I usually chop everything to about the size of a sugar cube. For sure peel the onion, but you can even leave the skin on the potatoes.
- Put everything in a big pot except the noodles (and the bread). Get that water boiling. And then toss in the noodles. Check the directions on the bag of noodles, but 10–12 minutes should do it. Stir a lot. Simmer (which means turn down the heat) while you cut the bread into nice thick one inch slices. Serve!

## A couple of other hints:

- Clean as you go
- Taste the broth and toss in spices until you like it. Don't burn your tongue
- Set the table with soup spoons, butter knives, bowls and bread plates. If there's any left over, just leave it on the stove to cool and make room in the fridge for the entire pot
- Insist that you also clean up the kitchen
- Finally, guys, deflect any praise. Do not assume or accept hero status for making one measly meal. Making a pot of soup once every couple of months is no big deal