

European Dinner Parties

The Netherlands

Caroline Nijenberg's Dutch Winter menu

- Bitterballen
- Groentesoep met balletjes - vegetable soup with ground meatballs
- Stampot boerenkool met worst - curly kale with sausage
- Vanilie vla - Dutch vanilla custard

Ingredients and cooking tips

Appetizer: Bitterballen – anytime with drinks (or ‘borrels’ in Dutch)

Bitterballen are not “bitter”. The name comes from “gin and bitters.” They are often eaten with Dutch gin, beers or other drinks in cafés, bars and at home.

Ingredients:

1 cup thick white sauce*
2 cups chopped cooked meat – beef, veal or ham
1 tablespoon minced parsley
Pepper, salt, Worcester sauce, cooking oil, mustard
1 egg
Fine dry bread crumbs
Cooking oil
Mustard

Mix sauce, meat, and parsley. Add pepper, salt and Worcester sauce to taste. Chill.
Shape into balls and roll in bread crumbs. Allow to dry for two hours in refrigerator.
Mix egg with 2 tablespoons of water.
Dip balls in egg and again in bread crumbs.
Cook in hot deep fat (400 F) for 1 to 2 minutes.
Serve piping hot on a toothpick with mustard.

* To make the white sauce yourself:

¼ cup butter
1 cup heavy cream
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 ½ cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium low heat. Add cream and simmer for 5 minutes, then add garlic and cheese and whisk quickly, heating through. Stir in parsley and serve.

Soup: Groentesoep met balletjes – vegetable soup with small meat balls (serves 6-8)

Soup ingredients:

3 cups diced fresh vegetables – leeks, carrots, beans, peas, parsley, celery (no tomatoes)
3 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons rice

Sauté the vegetables lightly in butter and add 6 cups of water, the salt and rice.
Cook until they are done.
Add the meatballs to the soup and simmer for 10 minutes.

Beef meat balls ingredients:

2 slices of white bread without crusts, soaked in very little milk
½ pound of ground fresh beef
1 egg
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg

Mix all ingredients well and roll into small balls.

Stampot Boerenkool met worst - curly kale with smoked sausages (serves 4)

Not fancy but this easy to make dish is a great meal in cold weather like right now in New England. "Stampot" means that vegetables and potatoes are mashed to a smooth consistency. Can also be mixed with sweet apples, sauerkraut, endive or carrots with onions. Served with gravy.

Ingredients:

3 pounds curly kale, washed and cut up very finely
3 pounds of potatoes, peeled and quartered
½ cup of milk
Salt and pepper to taste
1 smoked sausage
4 tablespoons fat, butter or margarine

Cook the kale in a little boiling water with salt for about 40 minutes, then drain well.
Add potatoes and sausage and enough water to prevent burning.
Cook for 30 minutes over medium heat.
Remove the sausage and drain the kale.
Mash the remainder well and stir in the milk and butter until smooth.
Season to taste with pepper. Serve with the sausage on top.

Vanilie vla – Dutch vanilla custard **(serves 4)**

A very common type of dessert in the Netherlands. Although a close resemblance to English custard, it is thickened not only with eggs but also with cornstarch. Can also be mixed with chocolate or coffee powder.

Ingredients:

2 cups of milk
 $\frac{1}{2}$ vanilla bean
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of cornstarch
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar
2 large egg yolks

Bring $1\frac{2}{3}$ cups of milk and vanilla bean to a boil.

Simmer gently over a low heat for a few minutes.

Mix the cornstarch and sugar in a small bowl, add the egg yolks and stir until very smooth.

Stir in the remaining milk and strain into a clean bowl.

Bring the vanilla-flavored milk back to boil and remove the pan from the heat.

Stir the cornstarch mixture into the pan and return to a very low heat.

Cook stirring for 3 minutes.

Remove and discard the vanilla bean.

Cover the surface with plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming. Let it cool.

Use a hand-held mixer and beat the mixture with cold milk to create the required consistency - a cross between a sauce and a dessert. Chill before serving.

Note:

In the Netherlands commercially made “vlas” in many different flavors are now available in grocery stores (see picture below). My husband still misses this dessert very much!

Smakelijk Eten!

Tips for your friends with dietary restrictions by Shari Solomon, certified nutritionist and owner of Cocoa Plum Nutrition in West Concord and Arlington.

Ahh the Dutch meal. The appetizer, soup, entree and dessert all look delicious.

There are only a couple alternatives and/or suggestions I would make. If you are watching your saturated fat intake, then replace the beef, veal, pork products with turkey or chicken. Ground beef usually comes in a leaner version up to 90% lean. Perhaps just half turkey and half your choice. You may find turkey meatballs and sausages are lighter on the stomach.

The amount of salt in this meal can be reduced by using low-salt sausages and eliminating salt from the recipes. Or just cut the amount used in half. Although parmesan cheese does not come in a low-salt version, different brands have different amounts of sodium. Check the nutrition labels, always a good habit to have. Supposedly, fresh grated parmesan has less salt than the pre-grated kind.

For those of you watching your weight, watch your intake of carbs. The breadcrumbs and bread found in the meatballs are small so the only place to watch is the amount of potatoes scooped into your bowl from the Stampot. Let the amount of potatoes equal a small baking potato or you can think of it as no larger than a tennis ball.

And of course, for those of you watching your fat intake or weight, then a slight taste or two of the dessert or if filled up enough by then, know it is okay to just skip the dessert. Enjoy!