

A bowlful of comfort food

By Reema Faris

Perhaps this weekend I'll fake a sore throat just to hear Mom say, "Do you want me to make you some chicken soup, dear?"

"Uh huh," I'd sniffle back, "with dumplings."

Mom's chicken soup is more than a curative — it's a meal in a bowl. Her thyme-tinged broth is replete with chunks of carrots, potatoes, squash, yams, zucchini, chicken, and noodles. Soup is a year-round option and can be so much better than Campbell's or Lipton's. If you're not up to chopping and simmering, soup providers are easily found (and no, Mom doesn't take orders).

Stew runneth over

At Dundarave's Calvin's Café, a daily soup is available as an appetizer.

But, it's Anna's Oyster and Seafood Stew with basil tomatoes and cream (\$15.95) that'll make you pass on dessert.

The bowl placed in front of me conjures up images of fishing fleets and ocean flung nets. Oysters, mussels, prawns, salmon, halibut, and cod keep company with mushrooms and red peppers in a delicate mint enhanced cream broth. Served with a slice of toasted garlic baguette, I would have liked to say it was good to the last drop, but I couldn't make it to the end of the deliciously generous portion.

Stock answers

At 2:30 p.m. on a Saturday, I'm happy to see I'm not the only one stopping for soup at Lonsdale Quay's The



Rob Newell photo

SOUP'S ON — The Stock Pot proprietor Ralf Dauns stirs up sumptuous servings for the Lonsdale Quay luncheon crowd.

Stock Pot. Here, you can eat in, take out to reheat at home, or buy basic stocks (chicken, beef, fish, vegetable, or veal flavours) to create your own soup from scratch.

The three soups on tap when I visit are Seafood Chowder, Cream of Chicken with Spinach, and Vegetable Noodle.

Cream isn't my thing but I'm weaning myself from coffee (those daily latte fixes are costing me a fortune) so indulging in a bowlful of creamy soup is a good antidote. I wallow in the comfort of it. Adherents of the "fat is evil" school will be happier with the

vegetable selection.

A small bowl of a Stock Pot soup is \$3.40, while the meal-size large is \$4. Both are served with a fresh baked bun.

Sit at the counter while you sip, and watch the chef concoct his potions at the open stovetop. You can catch him taste testing as he stirs with ogre-sized wooden spoons that make bicep-curls at the gym redundant.

Wonton pick-up

One of my favourite "I have nothing in the fridge" dinner solutions is the Wor Wonton soup from West Van's Capilano West Chinese Restaurant.

In addition to a handful of wontons, the soup includes slices of chicken, beef, and barbecue pork (the one disappointing ingredient in the mix), along with Chinese mushrooms, bok choy and the odd prawn.

For \$9.50, the take-out order comes in two large Styrofoam containers meant to feed four as an appetizer. I find that each container is one evening's meal for me.

What is the best part of this deal? I'm full, there are no dinner dishes for two nights running, and I get four fortune cookies to eat.

■ Calvin's Café, 2452 Marine Drive, West Van. Tel.: 922-4222. Hours: Breakfast Saturday, 8 a.m. to noon; Brunch Sunday, 10 a.m. to noon; Lunch Monday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; Saturday, 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.; Dinner Tuesday to Saturday, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Sunday, 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

■ The Stock Pot, Lonsdale Quay Market, North Van. Tel.: 983-2774. Hours: Monday through Sunday, 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Friday till 9 p.m.

■ Capilano West Chinese Restaurant, 2396 Marine Drive, West Van. Tel.: 922-2922. Hours: Monday to Friday, noon to 9:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. ●

