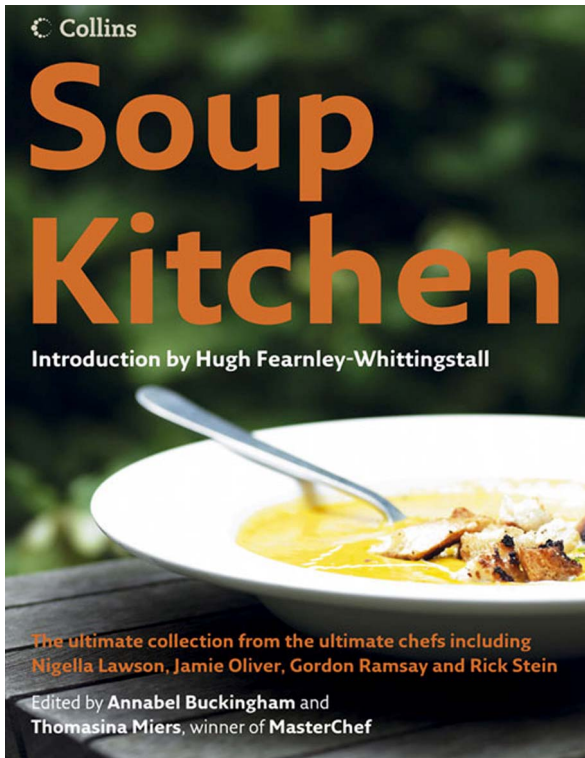


## Root Soup with Cheese Scones

I love soup. My kids love soup. They ask me to make it for them at least once a week. It is easy to throw together, and is usually made from whatever I find in the vegetable drawer at the bottom of the fridge, plus any herbs or spices I am in the mood for. A soup is a great way to get a big dose of vegetables: it is soothing, satisfying and worthy of poems.



### FOR THE ROOT SOUP:

250g parsnips  
250g sweet potatoes  
250g carrots  
150g red onions  
150g leeks  
150g celery  
1½ tsp cumin seeds  
1½ tsp crushed dried chilli salt and pepper to taste  
3 tbsp olive oil  
25g butter  
1.5 litres water

### FOR THE CHEESE SCONES:

150g butter, cut into small cubes  
450g plain flour, plus extra for dusting  
4 tsp baking powder  
300g strong Cheddar, grated  
1 tsp mustard powder (optional)  
150ml milk

Preheat the oven to 190°C/ Gas 5.

Peel, trim and roughly chop the parsnips, sweet potatoes and carrots. Peel, trim and chop the onions, leeks and celery.

Put half the carrots aside. Put the rest of the carrots, the parsnips and sweet potatoes in a baking tray. Add the spices, salt, pepper and 2 tbsp of the olive oil and shake the tray until all the vegetables are coated with oil. Place in the middle of the oven for up to 45 minutes, checking and turning from time to time until they are brown.

In a large pan add the remaining olive oil and the butter, and put on a gentle heat. Cook the onion until translucent, for about 5 minutes, then add the remaining carrot, with the celery and leeks. Grind over some pepper, cover and soften for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally to make sure it does not burn. If it becomes watery, take off the lid until all the liquid has evaporated. Add the water, roast vegetables and plenty of salt, and let simmer for a further 10 minutes. Take off the heat and let cool, then liquidise in a food processor.

Meanwhile, for the cheese scones, turn the oven temperature up to 220°C/ Gas 7.

Add the butter to a large bowl with the flour and baking powder. Rub the butter into the flour between your fingers and thumbs until it looks like breadcrumbs, then add the grated cheese and mustard powder (if using). Mix this through, pour in the milk and gently stir with your fingers to make a soft dough. Dust a work surface with extra flour, and also flour your rolling pin and hands. Gently roll out the dough until about 2cm thick, and using a small round pastry cutter or glass, cut out your scones. Place on a greased baking tray and bake in the middle of the oven for 10 minutes.

Reheat the soup and serve with buttered warm cheese scones.