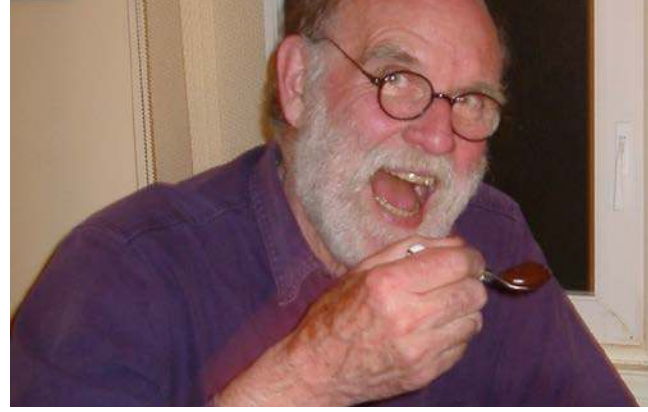


# Cock-a-Leekie Soup-Stew



Graeme Gibson, co-founder of PIBO, loved food almost as much as he loved birds—especially food from his ancestral home, Scotland. Cock-a-Leekie is mentioned as early as 1598 in a description of a Scottish knight’s table: the servants and “lower tables” ate clear soup with a bit of stewed meat while the upper tables “had a pullet with some prunes in the broth.” This particular recipe comes from Graeme’s *Traditional Scottish Cookery*; he often made the dish for Robbie Burns’ birthday, which also involved haggis and Scotch.

## INGREDIENTS

12 soft, pitted prunes (at least 2 each)

1 capon or chicken, 3-6 lbs.

Bouquet garni (see below)

12 medium-sized leeks (2-3 lbs)

1 LT. chicken stock

**SERVES 4-6 OR MORE, DEPENDING  
ON THE SIZE OF THE CHICKEN**

## METHOD

Rinse the bird with cold water and place, breast down, in a large soup pot. Add stock, then enough water to cover the chicken. Bring to a boil and skim the scum. Wash half the leeks and press them around the chicken. Cut in half if necessary to fit the pot.

Make a bouquet garni with 5 sprigs each of Italian parsley and thyme, 2 bay leaves, and 3 leek leaves, tied together with a ribbon of leek. Add the bouquet garni to the pot.

Simmer gently for an hour or until the chicken is almost falling off the bone. (The length of time will depend on the size, age, and freshness of the chicken.) When the chicken is almost cooked, lift it out of the pot onto a plate and cover with foil until it is cool enough to strip the meat. Strain the broth and discard the leeks. Let the broth sit for a bit if you want to skim off the fat.

Reheat the broth. Add the prunes and the rest of the leeks sliced on the diagonal. You can’t overdo the leeks: this soup is traditionally thick with them. Simmer 20 minutes or until the leeks are well done. Reduce the broth by leaving the lid off as it simmers until you get the intensity of flavour you like. Add salt and pepper if necessary, though it rarely is: the flavour will be delicate and delightful.

Pull the chicken into serving-size pieces and add it to the broth. Reheat and simmer for another 5 to 10 minutes. You can refrigerate the dish at this point and reheat gently just before serving.

Serve Cock-a-Leekie in bowls, making sure there is chicken, a goodly slather of leeks, and at least two prunes in each bowl, nestled like black emu eggs, then pour the hot broth over top. Don’t omit the prunes: they add richness and colour to the dish.

