

Alehouse Cheese Soup

- 3 tablespoons butter**
- 1 medium onion, peeled, chopped**
- 2 ribs celery, thinly sliced**
- 2 medium carrots, shredded**
- 1 (12-ounce) bottle or can dark beer**
- 1 (14 1/2-ounce) can chicken broth**
- 1 cup half-and-half OR whole milk**
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- 3/4 pound sharp cheddar cheese, shredded (3 cups)**
- Salt and ground red pepper (cayenne), to taste**

In a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Add onion, celery and carrots and cook, stirring often, until onion is soft but not brown.

Add beer and chicken broth. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer until vegetables are very tender, about 20 minutes.

Transfer mixture to a blender or food processor; blend or process until smooth. Return to pan and add half-and-half and nutmeg. Heat over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until soup is steaming.

Add shredded cheese, about 2 tablespoons at a time, whisking after each addition until cheese melts and texture is smooth. Do not let soup boil.

Season to taste with salt and ground red pepper. Serve at once.

Makes about 7 cups, 4 to 6 servings.