Vichyssoise, a chilled soup of potatoes, leeks and onions, has a place alongside ratatouille, French onion soup, gazpacho and other legendary, vegetable-heavy dishes of bucolic origin. Peasant food, as it were, that eventually became regarded as high-class.

Based on a dish that was once used to feed army battalions, it was popularized by Julia Child, who once said it was her favorite soup. It bewitched a young Anthony Bourdain and turned him into a foodie. It’s like a thin version of buttered, creamy mashed potatoes, flavored with onions and leeks. And who wouldn’t want to consume bowl after bowl of that?

Personally, I think traditional vichyssoise is a tad boring. And the soup’s highest profile proponents seem to wish to keep it that way. Most recipes frown on deviations, and keep it simple.

I don’t want to be presumptuous, but I feel that my version is better. It’s not exactly busier – salt and pepper remain the only seasonings – but it has more depth. It includes all of the original ingredients, but the leeks and onions are augmented by their cousin garlic, while the potatoes are joined by cauliflower and celery root, also known as celeriac.

Although my version is more complex than the original, it remains simple, and charms you in a similar way. Snazzing up this dish just doesn’t work, even with bacon bits, mayo, tomato, hot sauce, or other tweaks that usually improve anything. Here they fall flat. My vichyssoise-esque is at its absolute best when topped with no more than chopped chives, black pepper, and a drizzle of olive oil.

Those chives, along with the garlic, leeks and onions are all members of the allium or lily family. That’s a lot of allium for one dish, so if you are hesitant to call it vichyssoise, we could go with Cream of Allium soup instead.

Although my recipe calls for very little cream compared to the original, I consider the cream totally optional. Even without the cream, its still creamy, rich and maddeningly satisfying. A full bowl vanishes quickly, allowing you to have another, and another. And before you know it, the soup course becomes the main course, and the next thing you know, there’s no room for desert.

**Cream of Allium Soup *aka vichyssoise-esque***

This recipe ends up nearly as thick as mashed potatoes, but you can still eat it like a soup. For the chicken stock, I’m a huge fan of Better than Bouillon paste. But any form of stock will work, including cubes or liquid stock. If using liquid stock, substitute it for the water, and increase the salt levels accordingly as most commercially made stock contains none.

8 cups water

1 tablespoon chicken bouillon paste, or a cube

1 teaspoon salt

A pound of leeks, white and nearly white parts only, chopped

½ pound onions, not red, chopped

4 large garlic cloves, chopped

½ pound celeriac, peeled and chopped

½ pound potatoes, peeled and diced

1 pound cauliflower florets, broken into small pieces

4 T butter

4T olive oil

1 tablespoon lemon zest

¼ - ½ cup heavy cream (optional)

Black pepper and chopped chives to garnish.

Heat the water, salt and chicken stock to a boil. Add the potatoes. After five minutes add the celeriac. After another five minutes add the cauliflower. Cook another five minutes and turn it off. Allow to cool with the veggies in the water.

Saute the onions, leeks and garlic in the butter and oil on medium heat, stirring on occasion to keep from browning or worse. Cook for about 30 minutes until translucent and caramelized (a few brown spots are OK)

When everything is cool enough to work with, add the leeks, onions, garlic, potatoes, celeriac, cauliflower and the water they cooked in to a blender, along with the lemon zest and cream, and puree. Garnish with chives, black pepper, a drizzle of olive oil and serve.