

Stone Soup

(*Shaun Hately*)

Many – although not all – taverns in Ongus practice the tradition of 'Stone Soup' – that is, a large cauldron of a thick soup or stew, generally referred to as scumgullion or slumgullion, that is kept cooking constantly on a fire, for all to share. Those who can afford it are expected to pay for a bowl – a copper penny will do, but if you can afford more, even two pennies is viewed with kindness. It is understood – and sanctioned – by the Church, that paying more than a penny is a penance that will buy off some of your time in Purgatory. Payment in kind – putting something in the pot – a carrot or a turnip, ham, or some mutton, any wholesome food is just as good as money. If you cannot pay, no person is denied a bowl – the stone soup tradition is part of the way that Ongus makes some effort to ensure that people do not go hungry. The name derives from an old story that allowed people to place a stone in the pot if they had nothing else. Today it is considered better that nothing is added at all, rather than a stone from the street outside.

The stone soup tradition can also be found in other parts of Albion and there are some reports of it being found on the continent as well, although the residents of Ongus tend to doubt that this is true – they see it as a particular tradition of their own great city.

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