

Cream of Asparagus and Leek Soup

By "Art's Protege"

Serves 8-10

1 lb leek
1 large onion, chopped
2 stalks celery, finely chopped
2 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup white wine
1 lb asparagus, chopped in 1-inch pieces
6 cups chicken stock
1/8 teaspoon white pepper
1 cup light cream

Directions:

- 1 Trim green part of leeks and discard. Thoroughly wash white portion and finely chop. (I find it best to completely separate the layers.)
- 2 In large pot, saute leek, onion, and celery in butter and add white wine to keep vegetables moist. (You can alternately do this with some of the chicken stock.)
- 3 Add asparagus and 4 cups of the chicken stock. Season with pepper. Simmer for 1/2 hour or until vegetables are tender.
- 4 Puree the soup in small batches adding the remainder of the stock.
- 5 In another pot reheat (but not boil) the puree while whisking in the cream (or milk).
- 6 Serve immediately.

Sauce Forestiere (Wild mushroom sauce)

RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 pound wild mushrooms such as Black Forest, ceps or porcini
- 1/4 pound fresh mushrooms
- Salt to taste if desired
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

PREPARATION

1. Coarsely chop mushrooms; there should be about 2 cups of each.
2. Bring enough water to cover mushrooms to boil and add salt to taste. Add mushrooms and cook about 1 minute. Drain immediately. Put mushrooms in cheesecloth and squeeze to extract most of liquid.
3. Put mushrooms into the container of food processor or electric blender and blend as fine as possible. There should be about 1/2 cup.
4. Melt butter in saucepan and add mushrooms. Cook briefly and add cream, salt, pepper, nutmeg and cayenne pepper. Let simmer 5 minutes. Serve with roast meats, poached eggs, steamed fish, broiled chicken or roast rack of lamb (see recipe).

YIELD

4 to 6 servings

Ginger scented crème fraiche- Make ahead 1 day

4 cups heavy whipping cream
1 cup buttermilk
1/2 tsp fresh grated ginger

In a tightly sealed container (like a Mason jar or Tupperware) combine all ingredients, shake well, and set on the counter overnight. After 24 hours you will have crème fraiche!

Chocolate Decadence- make ahead 1 day

Makes: 12 servings

Active Time: 35 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours (including 2 hours cooling time), plus overnight chilling

INGREDIENTS

- 7 ounces 60-70% bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped (about 1 1/3 cups)
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably natural (see Note)
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup plus 1/4 cup sugar, divided
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup nonfat or low-fat milk
- 2 large egg yolks, at room temperature (see Tip)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 large egg whites, at room temperature
- 1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar

PREPARATION

1. Position rack in lower third of oven; preheat to 350°F. Line the bottom of an 8- or 9-inch cake pan (1 1/2 to 2 inches deep) with parchment paper and coat the sides of the pan with cooking spray. Put a kettle of water on to boil for Step 6.
2. Place chocolate and cocoa powder in a large bowl.
3. Combine flour, 2/3 cup sugar and salt in a small heavy saucepan. Whisk in just enough of the milk to form a smooth paste. Mix in the remaining milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon to prevent burning (especially around the sides and bottom edges of the pot), until the mixture begins to bubble. Boil gently, stirring constantly, for 2 to 2 1/2 minutes (the mixture will get very thick and then you may notice that it thins ever so slightly as the starch cooks). Scrape the hot mixture immediately over the chocolate and cocoa. Stir until the chocolate is completely melted and smooth. The batter will be very thick. Stir in egg yolks and vanilla.
4. Beat egg whites and cream of tartar in a mixing bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually sprinkle in the remaining 1/4 cup sugar, beating on high speed until the egg whites are stiff but not dry.
5. Gently fold about one-fourth of the egg whites into the chocolate batter to lighten it. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites until no white streaks remain. Scrape the batter into the cake pan, smoothing the top.

6. Set the cake pan in a larger baking pan and place on the oven rack. Pour enough boiling water into the baking pan to come a third to halfway up the side of the cake pan. Bake until the surface of the cake is slightly crusted and springs back when gently pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. (The cake will still be quite gooey inside.)
7. Meanwhile, to prepare candied orange peel (if using): Using a vegetable peeler, remove zest from oranges in 1 1/2- to 2-inch-long pieces. Cut the pieces into very thin strips, about 1/8 inch wide. Cook in a small saucepan of boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain. Bring more water to a boil and cook the orange peel for another 5 minutes. Drain.
8. Bring sugar and 1/4 cup water to a simmer in a small saucepan, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Add the orange peel, cover and simmer for 3 minutes. Transfer the syrup and peel to a bowl. Cover and chill overnight.
9. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the orange peel to paper towels to drain before using.
10. Remove the pans from the oven. Transfer the cake pan to a wire rack and cool completely, about 2 hours. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight before serving.
11. To serve: Soak the blade of a thin knife in a cup of very hot water until warm. Slide the knife around the sides of the pan to release the cake. Place a piece of wax paper on top of the cake. Invert a plate over the wax paper and invert the pan onto the plate. Remove the pan and peel away the paper liner. Place a serving plate over the cake and turn the cake right-side up again; remove the wax paper. Dip a sharp knife in hot water and wipe it dry before cutting each slice. Serve with Candied Orange Peel, if desired.

TIPS & NOTES

Make Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. | Equipment: 8- or 9-inch round cake pan, 1/2-2 inches deep; deep baking pan large enough to hold the cake pan; parchment paper

Note: Cocoa powder comes in two styles: natural and Dutch-processed. Dutch-processed cocoa has been treated with alkali, or "Dutched," to neutralize the natural acidity of cocoa, while natural has not. For this recipe, we prefer the taste of natural cocoa powder, although either type can be used.

Tips: To bring an egg to room temperature, submerge it (in the shell) in a bowl of lukewarm (not hot) water for 5 minutes.

When egg whites are beaten to "soft" peaks, the whites will still be soft enough to curl over when a beater is turned upside down. The whites are considered "stiff" peaks when they remain stiff and upright.

Basic Ganache

Basic ganache consists of just two ingredients: semi-sweet chocolate and heavy cream.

Bring the cream to a boil, then remove from the heat at once and pour over a bowl of chopped chocolate.

Let it stand, covered, for a moment to soften the chocolate, then whisk until smooth. For best results, let it cool overnight at room temperature.

Chocolate ganache can be poured as a coating, chilled and made into truffles, whipped into a delightfully light frosting or filling or just mixed into white frosting or whipped cream for instant chocolate flavor.

Raspberry Coulis

1 lbs fresh raspberries

2 cups sugar

1 cup water

In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, cook raspberries in water for 5 to 8 minutes; turn down to medium and add sugar. Cook down liquid until sauce thickens. Pool coulis on a dessert plate and place dessert portion on top of coulis; or pour coulis over dessert.

Chantilly Cream

Chantilly cream is classic vanilla whip cream.

2 cups heavy whipping cream

½ cup of confectioners' sugar

1 TBS vanilla

Preparation

Place all ingredients in an electric mixer and place on high. Mix until cream starts to thicken- DO NOT OVER MIX. Garnish dessert.