

## **Year round Green Vegetable Soup**

In this master recipe we are aiming to achieve a smooth and silky soup, packed full of flavour and nourishment and bright green in colour. This recipe can be seen as a year round formula for the various vegetables that come and go as the seasons change. By varying the green ingredient, you need never tire of this recipe. The choice of green vegetables that can be used here are many, but we have to choose one to get us going, so my choice is spinach.

Choose strong, handsome and really fresh looking leaves and the results will be dazzlingly green.

If the spinach leaves are big, the central rib will need to be removed before measuring the spinach leaves. If you are using baby spinach, the tender stalks can remain.

Nutmeg is one of the traditional flavourings for spinach and a small grating would be good here, but always be cautious with the addition of nutmeg as you know that too much nutmeg can spoil the pudding, or the soup in this case.

### **The ingredients**

- Potatoes and onions are used in the soup base. The onion adds flavour and the potato thickens the soup.
- The green vegetable you use will be the determining flavour of the finished soup. Spinach is my choice here but any of the following vegetables produce an excellent result. Green cabbage at any time of the year with tough ribs removed from the leaves and finely chopped is excellent. Nettle, watercress, wild garlic leaves, diced courgettes or cucumbers, swiss chard leaves, pea and bean leaves, dark green lettuce leaves and so on.
- Nutmeg is a strong spice, and should be used with restraint
- Chicken stock produces the most flavoursome result here.

### **Serves 6**

50g butter  
110g diced onion  
140g potatoes, peeled and diced  
1.2 litres chicken stock  
350g spinach leaves, weighed after removing stalks  
Freshly grated nutmeg, a very small grating optional  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
Creamy milk, ie; milk and cream mixed in equal proportion

Melt the butter in a heavy saucepan and allow to foam. Add the onions and potatoes, season with salt and pepper and toss with a wooden spoon to coat in the butter. Cover with a greaseproof paper lid and the lid of the saucepan and cook on a very low heat for 10 minutes or so. This is called “sweating” the vegetables. The object of the exercise is to soften the vegetables slightly with no colour at all. Add the stock, bring to a simmer and cover again with the saucepan lid. Simmer until the onion and potato is completely tender and starting to collapse. This will take about 15 minutes. Remove the lid of the saucepan

and add the spinach. **Do not replace the saucepan lid.** Bring to a simmer and cook until the spinach is tender. This can take from 1-2 minutes for baby spinach to 5 minutes for large leaves. If you cannot tell by looking at the vegetable if it is cooked, taste a little and it should be tender and slippery. Puree immediately with a hand held blender or in a liquidiser. Add a little more stock or creamy milk if the soup is too thick. Taste and correct seasoning adding a small grating of nutmeg if that is to your taste.

If not serving immediately, do not cover as this will spoil the green colour, but allow to cool at room temperature. The soup can then be covered and chilled for reheating later.

Serve in hot soup bowls, garnished with a little blob of cream or a few drops of olive oil.

The soup can be prepared ahead and reheated later, though the green colour will not be as strident as when it was first made.