



Potato & Leek Soup with Prunes

Potato and leek is a classic combination. In France they're cooked, puréed, passed through a sieve and mixed with cream to make vichyssoises, a traditional cold soup. This recipe is a more rustic version without cream, you can purée it as finely as you like but I prefer it with some texture. I add prunes to echo the flavour of a classic Scottish cock-a-leekie, but they're optional. Any leftover soup freezes well.

Serves 4–6 as a starter



INGREDIENTS

- 1 large or 2 medium-sized leeks, trimmed (about 500g total weight)
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 3 sprigs parsley
- 1 brown onion, finely chopped
- 40g butter
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 250g floury potatoes, peeled and cut into 1cm dice
- 1 litre water
- 4 prunes, pitted and finely sliced
- Soft white rolls, for serving

METHOD

1. Cut 2 long slices through most of the leek lengthways, leaving just the green part intact to hold it together.
2. Wash thoroughly, then finely slice the white and pale green part, reserving the dark green part for stock if you like.
3. Tie thyme, bay leaf and 2 sprigs of parsley together with a piece of kitchen twine to form a bouquet garni (see p.xx). Finely chop remaining parsley, cover and set aside for garnish.
4. Heat butter in a saucepan over a low heat, stir in leek, onion and a teaspoon of salt.
5. Cover and cook for about 15 minutes, stirring often, until softened thoroughly but not coloured.
6. Stir in potato, add water, bouquet garni and 2 teaspoons of salt and bring to the boil.
7. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for a further 15–20 minutes, until potato is tender.
8. Discard bouquet garni.
9. Use a stick blender to roughly blend everything together, without making it too smooth.
10. Taste and add salt and pepper; don't be shy with the seasoning, both potato and leek need a lot of salt to bring out their flavour.
11. Serve sprinkled with remaining parsley and with bread rolls on the side.