



Potato and Leek Soup

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Anna's Gourmet Goodies



Simple is good. One of the lessons I learned from listening to Julia Child is that great tasting food does not have to be complicated to prepare. Choosing fresh ingredients and preparing them properly is often all that is required to create a wonderfully flavorful dish.

The recent round of chilly mornings and a hectic work schedule have me thinking more about comforting foods that don't require too many ingredients and are

simple to prepare. Potato and leek soup is a classic that is easy to make, delicious, and good for you.

Leeks are a member of the Allium family of vegetables and are related to onions, shallots and garlic. They look like 'super scallions' and are readily available in most markets. They are in season from late summer through fall, but can generally be found throughout the year. They have a milder, sweeter taste than onions, and are loaded with B vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Leeks are thought to be native to Central Asia and were first cultivated in the Mediterranean about 3,000 years ago. Greeks and Romans believed they provided numerous health benefits, particularly for the throat. The Roman emperor Nero was believed to have eaten leeks to strengthen his voice.

When selecting leeks, look for ones that are 1 ½ " in diameter or less. Much larger, and they tend to be a bit fibrous. They should be firm, not wilted, with a white bulb and dark green leaves.

For the potatoes, I selected Yukon Golds. They are lower in starch than regular white potatoes and have a natural buttery flavor, just right to thicken this soup.

This is meant to be an easy recipe, so don't fret too much about having everything exact; it will turn out great!

Potato and Leek Soup

2 ½ lbs. Yukon Gold potatoes

1 ½ lbs. leeks
3 cloves garlic
4 cups water (broth is optional)
Extra virgin olive oil
3 strips of bacon
Salt
Fresh ground pepper
Sour cream
Fresh chives

Wash and peel the potatoes, cut into approximately ¼” chunks and set aside. Leeks must be washed thoroughly, as they tend to collect grit and dirt down inside the leaves. Start by removing a portion of the dark green tops. I like to use two thirds to three-quarters of the leek. Remove the root end and slice the leek lengthwise down the middle. Run them under cold water, checking inside the leaves to remove any sand and dirt. When clean, chop the leeks into ¼” pieces.

Heat a stockpot and coat the bottom lightly with extra virgin olive oil. Cook the bacon until it is crisp enough to break into bits when cooled and remove from the pot. Add the leeks and the garlic, stir, and cook over medium heat for about 3-4 minutes. Season with salt and fresh ground pepper. Moisture from the leeks should help you scrape up any bacon drippings from the bottom of the pot (the good stuff!)

Once the leeks have wilted, add the potatoes and stir. Add the water, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer for about 30-40 minutes. For a little extra flavor, I substituted about 1 ½ cups of vegetable broth for that portion of the water – your choice.

Check the potatoes with a fork to see if they are tender. When done, remove from the heat and let cool for about 10 minutes. Next, puree the soup using a hand blender, a potato masher, or a jug blender. The soup is hot, so I would not recommend using a handheld mixer with open beaters. Check the seasoning and add salt and pepper to taste. While you should not over use salt, remember, there are two pounds of potatoes in this soup.

Depending on the thickness of the soup, you may want to return the puree to the stockpot and add additional water to get it to the consistency you like. To serve, ladle into a bowl and carefully float a scoop of sour cream in the center. Sprinkle with bacon bits, and garnish with sprigs of fresh chives.

If you have questions about this recipe or would like to see something in the future, please drop a note to chris@annasgourmetgoodies.com.

Bon Appetit!