

Mussel & Saffron Soup.

900g/ 2lb rope cultured mussels
1 onion
1 leek
1 stick celery
2 cloves garlic
150ml/ 1/4 pt white wine
300ml/ 1/2 pt fish stock
300ml 1/2 pt double cream
2 or 3 bay leaves
30g/ 1oz unsalted butter
good pinch saffron strands
freshly ground black pepper
handful flat leaf parsley
handful chopped fresh chives

Scrub mussels & pull off beards. Scrape off any barnacles with a blunt edged knife.

Discard any open or broken molluscs.

Prepare & chop vegetables. Crush garlic.

Put the wine & a splash of the water into a shallow wide based pan with a lid. Bring to the boil. Add mussels to cover base of pan. Add lid & shake over heat until mussels open (about 1 to 2 mins.). Remove immediately to a colander over a bowl to save the juices. Repeat until all the mussels are cooked. Discard any which do not open. Remove mussels from shells & reserve. Strain all mussel juices through a fine sieve to remove any sand or bits of shell.

In a large clean pan melt the butter. Add the saffron & bay to release the flavour & then add the prepared vegetables & garlic. Sweat until softened.

Add the stock, the mussel juices & black pepper. Bring to the boil & then simmer until the vegetables are cooked, the flavours amalgamated & it is a yellow colour.

Add the cream & cook until the soup is lightly thickened & the cream caramelised.

Check seasoning. Take care with the salt. Remember the mussels themselves will be quite salty as well as sweet

Just before serving add the cooked mussels to heat through & the freshly chopped herbs to finish.

BACON AND SAGE POTATO CAKES

450g / 1lb floury mashed potatoes
85g / 3oz self-raising flour
1 teasp dry mustard
salt and black pepper
3 eggs
3 tbsp milk
3 tbsp double cream
1 egg white
4 rashers bacon
5 or 6 fresh sage leaves
a little butter to grease the skillet

Dice the bacon and then fry until crisp. Tear the sage leaves into small pieces

Mix the mash with the flour, mustard, eggs, milk, and cream. Beat until smooth

Lightly whisk the egg white and beat into the potato batter with the seasoning

Add the bacon and sage

Heat a griddle or skillet or heavy based frying pan until evenly hot. Grease lightly and then drop dessertspoonfuls of the batter onto the hot pan where it will hold its shape. Leave for a minute or so to cook on the underside

Carefully lift with a palette knife and when the underside is golden, flip over and cook on the other side. Keep warm between two folded napkins whilst you finish cooking all the pancakes

Serve hot as an accompaniment to the mussel soup