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**CELERIAC AND APPLE SOUP, WITH CELERIAC REMOULADE AND SAGE  
CROUTONS**



As the days get shorter and colder moving from Autumn into Winter, there is nothing more comforting than a steaming bowl of soup to give you a proverbial hug and warm you from the inside out. Late Autumn is also the prime season for British Cox apples, which are the tastiest in my opinion, offering just the right degree of sweetness, balanced with sharpness. One of my favourite winter vegetables is celeriac, whose earthy flavour marries beautifully with the Cox apple in this healthy and wholesome soup. I've added a remoulade to give another dimension to this flavour profile and echo the key ingredients in the soup; the recipe makes more than needed for this dish, but any leftovers are fantastic alongside other savoury dishes, such as smoked fish or cold meats, plus you can vary the dried spices depending on the flavour profile you want to create. You can also serve the soup without it if you like. Making croutons is a great way of using up stale bread, which won't disintegrate during cooking. I have used half-fat crème fraîche because I wanted a cleaner flavour and lighter texture; full fat crème fraîche is extremely thick, so would make the texture of the soup too heavy. This soup is so easy to make, can be frozen in portions for another time if you like, and it really celebrates the season.

**Ingredients (serves 8 as a starter)**

For the soup

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- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 2 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 2 thyme sprigs, leaves picked (discard tough stems)
- parsley stalks (from bunch used for garnish)
- 2 large Cox apples, peeled and chopped
- ½ a celeriac (weighing approximately 1kg), peeled and chopped
- 1 ½ litres vegetable stock
- 7 tbsp half-fat crème fraîche
- lemon juice to taste
- salt and freshly-ground black pepper

### For the remoulade

- 6 tbsp half-fat crème fraîche
- 2 tbsp mayonnaise (I used light mayonnaise but you can use full fat or home-made if you like)
- juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tsp cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 ½ tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ½ a celeriac, peeled
- 1 Cox apple, peeled
- 1 ½ tbsp. flat leaf parsley
- salt and freshly-ground black pepper

### For the croutons

- stale sourdough bread, cut into chunky cubes about 1-inch (about 150g in weight, or 2 rolls; any other white bakery loaf will do (not packet sliced))
- 2 tbsp olive oil



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- 1 tbsp dried sage
- salt and pepper

### To garnish

- flat parsley leaves
- crème fraîche

## Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/fan 180C.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the sliced onion and cook for about 5 minutes, then add the garlic, fennel seeds, nutmeg, then continue cooking for another 5 minutes, or until onions are soft. Add the celeriac, apple, picked thyme leaves and parsley stalks, then cook for about 5 more minutes. Add the stock, then turn the heat down to medium-low and continue cooking until the celeriac is tender.
3. Remove from the heat and – in batches – blitz in a blender until smooth. Stir in the crème fraiche and season to taste with salt, pepper and lemon juice.
4. While the soup is cooking, make the remoulade. Combine all the ingredients, except for the celeriac, apple and parsley, in a large mixing bowl. Cut the peeled celeriac and apple into fine matchsticks, then add to the bowl along with the chopped parsley until thoroughly mixed. (NB By having the dressing ready to add the celeriac and apple to, you can stir together straight away so that the acid from the lemon and vinegar will coat the celeriac and apple to ensure they don't oxidize and turn brown. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
5. To make the croutons, place the bread cubes on a large baking tray. Drizzle with the olive oil, scatter over the dried sage, then season well with salt and black pepper and toss so that the bread cubes are well coated. Toast in the preheated oven for 5 minutes, until golden brown all over.
6. To serve, reheat the soup if necessary. Warm some soup bowls in the microwave (or using residual heat in the oven after turning it off), then place a small mound of the remoulade in the centre of each one. Pour the soup carefully around the remoulade, then



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drizzle some crème fraîche in a line around the bowl, scatter over some croutons and parsley leaves, then serve.

