

Holiday Chestnut Soup

AF DuPage – December 19, 2020

Servings: 3

Ingredients:

2 ounces smoked ham, roughly chopped

2 Tablespoons unsalted butter

1 small shallot, roughly chopped

2 ounces carrot, roughly chopped

2 ounces white part of a leek, roughly chopped

2 ounces celery, roughly chopped

24 ounces chicken stock

1 ¼ pound fresh chestnuts, roasted and peeled (OR 1 pound whole roasted and peeled chestnuts, available online)

1 bay leaf

1 sprig fresh thyme

2 ounces heavy cream

1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

¾ teaspoon salt

1/16 teaspoon ground black pepper

Method:

Heat the chopped ham and butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat; cook, stirring occasionally, until ham is almost crisp, 3–4 minutes.

Add shallot, carrot, leek, and celery; cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are soft, 5–7 minutes.

Add chicken stock, prepared chestnuts, bay leaf, and thyme; bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to medium; cover, cook until chestnuts are very tender, about 30

minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly. Discard bay leaf and thyme. Working in batches, purée soup in a blender or food processor until smooth.

Return soup to saucepan and place over medium heat. Stir in cream, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Adjust the seasonings if desired. Cook over medium heat until soup is slightly thick, about 5 minutes more.

Garnish with parsley (optional) before serving.

How to prepare the chestnuts:

Equipment – sheets of aluminum foil, baking sheet

***PLEASE USE CAUTION WHEN CUTTING CHESTNUTS**

Place the chestnuts flat side down on a cutting board. Use a serrated knife to score on both sides of each chestnut. The serrated knife will not slip as much on the exterior layer.

Once you've scored them all, place the chestnuts in boiling hot water for 1 minute. (This will help them steam in the oven.) Drain.

Make a parcel by tearing a length of aluminum foil about 12 inches long, and place about one quarter of the chestnuts in a single layer. Gather up the edges to form a parcel with a small opening on top (while still keeping them in a single layer). Place the parcels on a baking sheet. Repeat this 3 more times to use all the chestnuts.

Bake at 350°F until the edges of the chestnut shells really curl up, at least 30 minutes. Leave the baking sheet in the oven and working with one parcel at a time, peel off the shell and the skin at the slice. (A paring knife makes this job easier). Do this as soon as they are cool enough to handle; **the shells are harder to peel when cold.** Don't open up a parcel until you are ready to peel the chestnuts. If necessary, put them back in the oven to stay warm.

Save the inner portion of the chestnut for use in the soup. Discard the shells.