

Soups

The River Café's Chestnut and Celeriac Soup

From "River Café Cook Book Green" by Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers. Published by Ebury Press

Serves 6

- 500g/18oz Sierra Rica Peeled and Cooked Chestnuts – Jar or Vacpack
- 4 small celeriac, peeled and cubed
- 60g/2oz unsalted butter
- 150g/5oz pancetta, finely sliced then cut into small pieces
- Inner white heart of 2 heads celery, trimmed and roughly chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped
- Chicken stock to cover, barely 1 litre
- 5 juniper berries, crushed
- 4 fresh bay leaves, centre spine removed, leaf apart finely chopped
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 150ml double cream
- 100g/3oz Parmesan, freshly grated
- extra virgin olive oil

1 - In a large, thick-bottomed saucepan, melt the butter, add the pancetta and slowly cook until transparent. Add the celeriac and celery and stir to combine the flavours for a few minutes. In a separate saucepan heat the chicken stock. Add the whole peeled chestnuts and the chopped garlic to the celeriac and celery. Cook on a low flame, stirring, then add the juniper berries and bay leaves. Test the hot stock for seasoning, then pour in enough to cover just the vegetables. Bring to the boil and simmer for 15 - 20 minutes, or until the celeriac is soft.

2 - Using a potato masher or wire whisk, break up the vegetables in the saucepan to achieve a rough, thick soup. Alternatively pulse-chop half the soup in a food processor, then return to the saucepan and combine.

3 - Finally stir in the cream. Heat through and serve with grated Parmesan and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil."