

SOUPS

Continued from Page B1

When puréed together — and these recipes are going to require a lot of puréeing — the ingredients become better than their individual parts. The soup is also light and smooth, perfect for a warm summer's evening.

I went the elegant route for my next effort, Asparagus and Shiitake Mushroom Soup. The recipe came from the now-sadly-closed Trellis restaurant, which in its heyday was one of the best restaurants in Virginia.

I have made asparagus soup many times, and loved it. I have made mushroom soup many times, and loved it. But never have I thought to combine the two into one incredible dish. That takes the kind of culinary genius possessed by Marcel Desalniers, the pioneering original chef-owner of the Trellis.

The soup that results is magnificently subtle, playing the delicate, fresh springlike taste of asparagus off the satisfying umami burr of the shiitake mushrooms.

As befits the restaurant that also created the dessert called Death By Chocolate, this soup is not for people counting their Weight Watchers' points. A rich roux turns the texture of the soup to velvet, and the flavors are all tied together by a cup of heavy cream.

I used half-and-half to save a few calories. That way, I felt virtuous and healthful, even though I wasn't.

My next soup also came from a famous restaurant. Cream of Zucchini and Almond Soup was a dish served at the Walnut Room in the flagship State Street location of the Marshall Field's store in Chicago.

And again I am in awe at the creativity of chefs.

Who would ever think to combine the grassiness of zucchini with the warm, nutty crunch of almonds? And then who would think to put it together in a cream soup?

But that's not where the brilliance of this dish ends. The soup stands out because of the subtle inclusion of sweet spice: a restrained mixture of brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg.

It's a soup unlike any you've had before, unless you've been to the Walnut Room.

My last soup is the easiest of them all to make. Sweet Pea Soup also has the freshest taste — even though it uses frozen peas.

You could use fresh peas if you can find them.

All you do is simmer together the peas, some sweet red pepper, a hunk of onion and a carrot in



Sweet pea soup.

chicken stock, vegetable stock or even ham stock. When the vegetables are thoroughly cooked, but just barely, you puree it to a silky smooth texture.

Salt it generously and serve it, if you want, with croutons or crumbled bacon.

I used both. It seemed like a summery thing to do.

BEET-FENNEL-GINGER SOUP

Yield: 8 servings

- 2½ cups red beets, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups chopped cabbage
- 2 cups chopped fennel
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 3 tablespoons chopped ginger
- 8 cups vegetable stock, divided
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup nonfat yogurt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fennel sprigs

1. Combine the beets, cabbage, fennel, garlic, ginger and 6 cups of the stock in a large soup pot and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce the heat to medium low, and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 25 minutes.

2. Strain the soup through a large-mesh sieve. Purée the vegetables in 1 cup of the heated broth in a food processor or blender until smooth (you may have to do this in batches). Add the remaining heated broth, and blend. If the soup is not of a pourable consistency, add some of the

remaining 2 cups of broth until it reaches your desired texture.

3. Chill at least 2 hours before serving. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in chilled bowls, if desired, with yogurt and fennel sprigs.

Per serving: 60 calories; 1 g fat; 1 g saturated fat; 1 g cholesterol; 3 g protein; 13 g carbohydrate; 8 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 756 mg sodium; 51 mg calcium

— Adapted from "Healthy Cooking" by At Home with the Culinary Institute of America

ASPARAGUS AND SHIITAKE MUSHROOM SOUP

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 pound fresh asparagus
- ½ pound shiitake mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 4 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 medium leeks, white part only, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- Salt and pepper
- 6 cups chicken stock
- 7 tablespoons butter
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup heavy cream or half-and-half

1. Fill a large bowl with ice and water, and set aside. Bring 3 quarts of salted water to a boil.

2. Snap the woody stem off each stalk of asparagus, and reserve. Lightly peel half the number of stalks. Chop the reserved ends and the remaining unpeeled asparagus into ¼-inch pieces. Cover with plastic wrap and re-

frigerate until needed. Blanch the peeled asparagus in the boiling water. Do not overcook; the asparagus should be cooked yet remain crisp. Transfer the blanched asparagus to the ice water.

3. When the blanched asparagus is cool, cut into ¾-inch pieces. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed.

4. Remove and chop the mushroom stems. Slice and reserve the caps.

5. Heat the vegetable oil and water in a large saucepan over medium heat. When hot, add the chopped (¼-inch) asparagus, mushroom stems, celery, leeks and onions. Season with salt and pepper and sauté until the onions are translucent, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil.

6. While the chicken stock is heating, melt the butter in a separate large saucepan over low heat. Add the flour to make a roux and cook, stirring constantly, until the roux bubbles, 6 to 8 minutes. Strain 4 cups boiling stock into the roux and whisk vigorously until smooth. Add the remaining stock and vegetables. Whisk until well combined. Lower the heat and simmer for 10 minutes.

7. Purée in a blender or a food processor. Strain into a 5-quart saucepan and return to low heat. Hold at a simmer for a few minutes while completing the recipe (Note: If you are not going to serve the soup within 1 hour,

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do not complete the next step until ready to serve; otherwise, the delicate flavor and color of the asparagus will be dissipated).

8. Heat the cream, sliced shiitakes and ¼-inch asparagus pieces in a nonstick sauté pan over medium heat. When hot, add to the soup and adjust the seasoning. Serve immediately. (This soup may be held hot in a double boiler for up to 1 hour.)

Per serving: 250 calories; 18 g fat; 11 g saturated fat; 45 g cholesterol; 6 g protein; 19 g carbohydrate; 4 g sugar; 3 g fiber; 389 mg sodium; 58 mg calcium

— Recipe from "The Trellis Cookbook" by Marcel Desalniers

CREAM OF ZUCCHINI AND ALMOND SOUP

Yield: 8 servings



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MAMMEN

Continued from Page B1

Halsey had her Merle Norman Cosmetic Studio, Betty Bruce would style a wig just for you, and Geri Koller, a beauty advisor, helped you pull it all together for any social event that might come along. Next came Valdene Gould and Judy Loudermilk, proprietors of The Cedar House, selling an assortment of imported gifts, gourmet cookware and a variety of other unusual and useful household items.

And then there was Lucy's Cafe. Lucy Bingham had worked in the Sacajawea Coffee Shop for 15 years and then at the Top Notch for two years. Now, she had her own place in Pat's Alley. This dream of Pat Fitzgerald had

turned into a festive downtown shopping and gathering place for the people of La Grande.

The Fitzgerald family have played a part in the development of La Grande for many years.

David and Cora married in Nez Perce, Idaho, in 1895 and, after living in Washington for a short while, came to La Grande in the early 1900s. It was here they raised their four children, a daughter, Mary May, and three sons — David Clark, John Edward and Patrick James. David, a machinist, was the proprietor of a foundry, La Grande Iron Works, at the corner of Washington and Elm. In 1913, he moved the building and his business to 1604 Cove Ave., where the building still remains and Wyatt Williams

has his welding business. The corner of Washington and Elm then became the home of the new YMCA building across Washington from the First Presbyterian Church.

The three boys were in the furniture business for a while. Then in 1945, Pat, the youngest, decided to do something entirely different. He started a nursery/landscaping business and finally settled into the florist business operating in a number of spots through the years before settling into Pat's Alley and becoming one of the longest operating businesses in downtown La Grande.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!

■ Ginny Mammen has lived in La Grande for more than 50 years and enjoys sharing her interest in the history of people, places and buildings.

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