

ROASTED LEEK, CELERY & SPINACH SOUP

ZUPPA DI PORRI AL FORNO, SEDANO E SPINACI

The depth of flavour in this soup is incredible, not to mention its rich, vibrant colour. Roasting and charring the leeks rather than simply frying them gives a lovely sweet, smoky flavour, while the mascarpone provides a hint of creaminess. I've used vegetable stock in this recipe, so it's suitable for vegetarians, but chicken stock would be fine too. Serve with warm crusty bread.

Serves 6

5 leeks, cut into rounds 3cm thick	1.3 litres hot vegetable stock
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	250g fresh spinach
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves	100g mascarpone cheese
1 large onion, peeled and roughly chopped	15g toasted pine nuts
5 celery sticks, roughly chopped	Salt and freshly ground black pepper
150ml dry white wine	

1] Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Place the leeks in a shallow roasting tin, about 25 x 35cm. Drizzle over 3 tablespoons of the oil, scatter over the thyme and season with salt and pepper. Use your hands to mix everything together thoroughly. Roast for 25 minutes, stirring halfway through. Remove from the oven and set aside.

2] Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil in a medium saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion and fry for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the celery and fry for about 3 minutes.

3] Increase the heat to high. Pour in the wine, bring to the boil and let it bubble for 1–2 minutes. Add the roasted leeks and the stock and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.

4] Stir in the spinach. When it has wilted (this will take a few seconds), remove the pan from the heat. Blend and season with salt and pepper.

5] To serve, ladle the soup into warm bowls. Add a spoonful of mascarpone in the centre and scatter over the pine nuts.

