Creamy Leek and Celery Braise with Cheddar Toasts

4 bowls of creamy vegetables, each with 2 cheddar toasts · Active 25 min · Total 50 min

Skills: Gentle vegetable braising and making a simple milk sauce

Ingredients

• 2 large leeks, pale and light-green parts, thoroughly washed and sliced (400 g prepared)

• 6 celery stalks, sliced 1/3 inch/8 mm thick (400 g prepared)

• 1 medium onion, finely chopped (150 g prepared)

• 2 tablespoons neutral oil (30 ml)

• 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour (25 g)

• 1 1/2 cups milk (360 ml)

• 1 cup water (240 ml), plus up to 1/4 cup/60 ml more if needed

• 2 teaspoons prepared yellow mustard (10 g)

• 1 teaspoon dried thyme (1 g)

• 3/4 teaspoon fine salt (4.5 g)

• 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper (1 g)

• 8 slices plain wheat bread (320 g total)

• 1 packed cup grated cheddar (120 g)

Set out

knife and board, colander, wide 3-quart/3 L lidded saucepan, wooden spoon, measuring jug, baking tray, oven or grill/broiler, oven mitts, food thermometer

Allergens

wheat, milk, mustard, celery. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Prepare and wash the leeks, then cut all the vegetables. Heat oil in the wide saucepan over medium-low heat. Add onion, leeks and celery and cook for 10 minutes, stirring regularly, until the leeks have softened.

2. Stir in flour for 1 minute. Gradually stir in milk, then the measured 240 ml water, keeping the mixture smooth. Add mustard, thyme, salt and pepper. Bring to a gentle simmer.

3. Cover and cook over low heat for 18–22 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes, until the celery is tender. If the sauce becomes too thick before then, add up to 60 ml extra water, a tablespoon at a time. Do not boil hard.

4. Meanwhile, heat the oven to 425°F/220°C. Put bread on the tray and toast for 4 minutes, turn and toast for 2–3 minutes more. Divide cheddar between all 8 slices and return to the oven for 3–4 minutes until melted. Watch so the edges do not burn.

5. Divide the vegetables and all the sauce between 4 bowls. Give each person 2 cheese toasts and serve hot, with the toast beside rather than submerged in the sauce.

Use the whole measured portion

The toast and cheese turn a pan of vegetables into four meals. They are mandatory parts of this recipe, not extra garnish hidden outside the ingredient list.

Ingredient labels

Celery is a base ingredient, and prepared mustard is included. Check bread and mustard labels for additional allergens such as sesame, soy or egg.

A useful detail

Celery that has been cut thickly may need a few extra minutes. Use tenderness as the endpoint, keeping the sauce at a gentle simmer and stirring the bottom regularly.

Keep it well

Cool vegetables in shallow containers and refrigerate within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Keep at 40°F/4°C or below for up to 3 days. Reheat the portion needed to 165°F/74°C throughout, stirring with a splash of water if thick. Make the cheese toast fresh where possible; refrigerate any cooked toast separately and reheat it to 165°F/74°C throughout.