



Recipe

HOLIDAY CHESTNUT SOUP

SERVES 6

ingredients

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. 4 tbs. unsalted butter | 6. 1 cup ruby port |
| 2. 1 medium organic carrot, finely chopped | 7. 1 thyme sprig |
| 3. 1 celery stalk, finely chopped | 8. 3 cups (750 ml) organic, low-sodium chicken broth |
| 4. 1/2 medium yellow onion, finely chopped | 9. 1/2 cup heavy cream |
| 5. 2 cups (500 ml) cooked chestnuts, from one 14.8-ounce (420-g) vacuum-packed jar | 10. Kosher salt, Freshly ground black pepper |
| | 11. Finely chopped fresh Italian parsley or chives, for garnish |

- In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, melt the butter. Add the carrot, celery, and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 10 minutes.
- Add the chestnuts and cook, stirring, for 4 minutes longer. Add the port and thyme, raise the heat to medium-high, and cook, stirring frequently, until the port has reduced by half, about 4 minutes.
- Add the broth and bring to a boil. Partially cover the pan, reduce the heat to low, and simmer until the ingredients are tender, and 30 minutes. Discard the thyme sprig.
- Remove the pan from the heat and stir the cream into the soup. Working in batches, puree the soup in a blender, following the manufacturer's instructions to avoid splattering the hot liquid, and pouring each pureed batch into a large bowl. Return all of the puree to the saucepan, return the pan to medium-low heat, and bring the soup to a simmer. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Ladle the soup into heated serving bowls, garnishing with parsley or chives before serving.

BRAISED CHESTNUTS OR CHESTNUT PUREE

SERVES 6

ingredients

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. 2 tablespoons vegetable oil | vacuum-packed jars |
| 2. 2 tablespoons unsalted butter | 3 cups (750 ml) organic, low-sodium chicken broth |
| 3. 1/2 cup (125 ml) finely chopped yellow onion | 7. 2 sprigs fresh thyme |
| 4. 1 cup (250 ml) ruby port | 8. Kosher salt |
| 5. 4 cups (1 l) cooked chestnuts, from two 14.8-ounce (420-g) | 9. Freshly ground black pepper |
| | 10. Finely chopped parsley or chives |

- Heat a heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the oil, butter and chopped onion. Saute, stirring frequently, until the onion turns a light golden brown, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the port and stir and scrape with a wooden spoon to deglaze the pan deposits.
- Add the chestnuts, broth, thyme, and a little salt and pepper. Bring the liquid to a boil, stirring occasionally. Then, cover the pan, reduce the heat to maintain a simmer, and cook until the chestnuts are tender and have absorbed most but not all of the liquid, about 30 minutes, checking occasionally to stir and to make sure the liquid hasn't completely evaporated. Remove and discard the thyme.
- Offer as whole braised chestnuts. Or pass the chestnuts in batches through a ricer into a heated bowl, stirring in the remaining liquid from the pan, to make a puree. Season to taste, as necessary, with a little more salt and pepper.
- Serve the whole or pureed chestnuts garnished with chopped parsley or chives.

WOLFGANG PUCK'S KITCHEN

CHESTNUT HOLIDAY SOUP

This year, enjoy your holiday chestnuts simmering in an open pot

Fortunately, you can now find whole already-cooked chestnuts, peeled and sealed in jars

BY WOLFGANG PUCK
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY
www.wolfgangpuck.com
@WolfgangBuzz

If you grew up almost anywhere cold in North America or Europe, one of the most evocative sensations of the holiday season is the smoky-sweet smell of chestnuts, roasting irresistibly on charcoal-fueled street-corner stands. I'll bet right now, at that very thought, you're hearing in your head the famous lyrics of "The Christmas Song," written and sung by the late Mel Tormé, who dined often at my Spago restaurant in Beverly

Both music and foods have an uncanny power to spark our memories. And chestnuts are among those ingredients that capture the holiday spirit.

That's been true now for centuries, with chestnuts figuring prominently in celebrations grand and humble across the Western world. How many times have you read or heard Charles Dickens'

description of the Cratchit family's modest festivities in "A Christmas Carol," when "apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovelful of chestnuts on the fire"?

Nowadays, many home cooks hesitate to roast their own chestnuts, whether because they lack a fireplace or they simply don't want to go through the time and bother of scoring an X in the hard, shiny shell of each nut, then cooking them in the oven, and finally peeling off those bothersome shells.

Fortunately, you can now find whole already-cooked chestnuts, peeled and sealed in jars, ready to use. Imported from France or Italy, they're available at this time of year in many gourmet food stores, Italian delis, and well-stocked supermarkets, as well as online.

I love to use these chestnuts in two of my favorite holiday dishes: a silky, smooth chestnut soup to start a special meal, and a luxuriously thick puree to accompany a festive roast. The

recipes share many similarities, particularly simmering the chestnuts with broth and some Port wine, and then pureeing them, using a blender for the soup and a hand-operated ricer for the much thicker side dish.

Whichever you choose to prepare (and there's nothing that says you can't try both recipes, one for Christmas and one for New Year's Eve), there's another benefit of chestnuts that's well worth celebrating: They're a good dietary choice.

Unlike most nuts, which are very high in fat, chestnuts get only about 7 percent of their calories from fat, so the relatively small amounts of butter and cream in the recipes don't impact them much. One serving delivers a remarkable 62 percent of the recommended daily allowance for Vitamin C, possibly helping you ward off winter colds. They're also a good source of dietary fiber, so you'll feel fuller before you get to those holiday desserts.

Who knew that chestnuts could actually help you get a jump on the most popular New Year's resolution: to eat more healthily?

(c) 2014 WOLFGANG PUCK WORLDWIDE, INC. DISTRIBUTED BY TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY, LLC.



WOLFGANG PUCK'S KITCHEN
WOLFGANG PUCK