

Creamed Spinach Deluxe

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YieldMakes 6 servings

Ingredients

1/4 cup water
2 big bunches baby spinach leaves
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter
1/3 cup chopped onion
1 bay leaf
1/2 dried small red chile, such as Japonese or de árbol
1/4 teaspoon black peppercorns
1/4 cup all purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 1/4 cups whole milk
1/2 cup whipping cream

Preparation

Bring 1/4 cup water to boil in large pot. Add half of spinach to pot; toss until wilted but still bright green, about 3 minutes. Add remaining spinach and toss until just wilted. Transfer spinach to strainer set over large bowl. Press on spinach to release all liquid. Transfer spinach to work surface; coarsely chop. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)

Melt butter in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, bay leaf, dried chile, and peppercorns; sauté until onion is soft but not brown, about 3 minutes. Whisk in flour and salt. Cook until mixture is pale gold and has nutty aroma, whisking constantly, about 3 minutes. Gradually whisk in milk. Boil until thick, stirring constantly, about 2 minutes. Strain béchamel sauce into medium bowl.

Heat cream in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat until just simmering. Add béchamel; whisk until mixture is smooth and begins to simmer. Add spinach and stir until heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Test-kitchen tip:

Be sure to remove as much water as you can from the cooked spinach (otherwise the finished dish may be watery, rather than creamy).