

Cullen skink

Ingredients

For the fish stock

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 200g/4oz chopped white vegetables: white of leeks, fennel and onion
- 100ml/3½fl oz dry white wine
- 2 Arbroath smokies, roughly chopped

For the soup

- 20g/¾oz unsalted butter
- 2 banana shallots, finely chopped
- 100g/4oz leek, white only, finely chopped
- 2 medium garlic cloves, crushed then finely chopped
- 200g/7oz waxy potatoes, boiled until tender then peeled
- 2 Arbroath smokies, skin and bones removed
- 100ml/3½fl oz whole milk
- 100ml/3½fl oz double cream (Optional, I don't use cream)
- freshly ground black pepper

For the garnish

- 1 Arbroath smokie, skin and bones removed
- chopped chives

Preparation method

1. For the fish stock, put the oil into a heavy saucepan and heat; then add the vegetables and stir well to coat with the oil. Cover and sweat over a low heat for about ten minutes; do not allow them to colour. Take the lid off the pan and pour in the white wine. Boil for one minute. Now add 1.2 litres/2 pints of water and the smokies. Bring up almost to the boil; then skim well. Reduce the heat and simmer very gently for 20 minutes. Allow to cool. Once cold, strain the stock. (The stock can be made two days ahead and kept chilled until needed.) Discard the vegetables but flake the fish and reserve.
2. To make the soup, put a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the butter and, when melted, add the shallots, leek and garlic. Cover and sweat for 5-10 minutes, but don't allow the vegetables to colour.
3. Add the cooked potatoes. Flake the smokies and add to the pan. Cover and sweat for a further two minutes, then add 1 litre/1¾ pints of the reserved stock and season with freshly ground black pepper. Bring to the boil and simmer for 8-10 minutes.
4. Take the pan off the heat and allow to cool slightly. Blend half of the soup in a blender and add the milk as required. Mix with the rest of the soup. (If you prefer, you can blend all of it to get a uniform smooth soup, but I like finding bits of potato and vegetable).
5. To serve, pour the soup into a clean pan and heat gently. Flake the remaining smokie in soup bowls and add the soup, garnished with chopped chives.