

RECIPE for health

MARCH 2010 In partnership with Health4U and Culinary Services

Featured Food:

LEEKS



By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Europeans refer to leeks as “poor man’s asparagus” presumably because of their delicate flavor and relatively small price tag. Or perhaps it’s the leek’s green section growing out of the ground that has earned the title. In actuality, leeks have little in common with asparagus.

The leek is a member of the allium family. Most onions have a bulb — not so for leeks. With their long, cylindrical white stalk and flat, strap-like green leaves, leeks might best be described as giant scallions. Wild leeks, also known as ramps, are smaller in size but have a more intense flavor.

Leeks require a long growing season. They begin appearing in the farmers’ markets by late summer and are available through the fall, winter and early spring. Look for leeks that have proportionately more white than green with a firm, white stalk and stiff green leaves.

The leek’s white portion is its prize, which is why farmers mound soil up around the stem of the growing plant to shield it from the sun. Leeks grow in tightly wrapped layers of leaves, forming crannies where dirt particles become trapped. The result is a vegetable that is notoriously dirty.

How to Clean a Leek:

1. Cut away the top green portion just where the vegetable turns from white to light green and peel away any dry layers. Discard the green leaves or keep them to use when making stock.
2. Cut away the root just enough to keep the base intact.
3. Slice the white portion in half lengthwise.
4. Swish gently in a bowl of cold water. Change the water as needed and continue swishing until thoroughly clean.

Small, tender leeks can be sliced and used in salads, or left whole to steam or grill. Larger leeks can be featured in soups and stews where the vegetable almost melts as it cooks. Slice leeks thin and deep fry as a unique garnish. Any way you use them, leeks will offer a deliciously subtle onion flavor to enhance your dish.

Braised Chicken Breast with Leeks and Olives

Recipe tested by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 6.

- 6 Chicken Breast Halves, bone-in and skin-on
- 2-3 teaspoons Kosher Salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon Coarse Ground Black Pepper
- 3 Tablespoons Olive Oil, divided
- 4 Leeks, trimmed & cleaned (cut into 1” pieces)
- 2 Tablespoons Minced Garlic
- 6 Fresh Thyme Sprigs
- 2 Fresh Oregano Sprigs
- 1 Bay Leaf
- ¾ cup Green Olives (cut in half)
- ½ cup Red Wine
- 1½ cup Chicken Stock or Broth
- 1 teaspoon Lemon Zest
- 2 Tablespoons Unsalted Butter (opt)
- ¼ cup Cold Water or Broth (opt)
- 2 Tablespoons Corn Starch (opt)

The night before making the dish, season the chicken with one tablespoon of olive oil, one teaspoon of salt and a half teaspoon of pepper. Cover and refrigerate.

Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a dutch oven or a large oven-proof sauce pan. Add the chicken and brown it for two to three minutes on each side. Remove the chicken from the pan and set it aside on a plate or sheet tray.

Add the leeks to the pan; reduce heat to medium and sauté for one to two minutes. Deglaze the pan with wine and scrape the bottom of the pan. Add the garlic; sauté for 30 seconds. Add the chicken stock or broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; add chicken, thyme, oregano, bay leaf and olives; simmer for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F.

Cover pan and place in oven for one hour, turning chicken halfway through.

Remove pan from oven. Transfer chicken, olives and leeks to a warm serving platter. Discard herb stems and bay leaf. Add lemon zest to the liquid in the pan. To make a pan sauce, bring the liquid to simmer; remove from heat and stir in the butter. Or, to make a thickened sauce, mix ¼ cup cold water or broth with corn starch. While whisking, add corn starch liquid to the simmering pan liquid and cook until thickened. Season sauce with salt to taste. Ladle the finished sauce over the chicken, olives and leeks.

This recipe will be served for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Riverwalk Market at Owen Hall, Holmes Dining, Shaw Dining, Brody Dining, Yakeley Dining and Holden Dining on March 18.

Visit www.eatatstate.com for hours and menus.

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