



BROWN BAG LUNCH IN THE GARDEN

June 17, 2011—Leeks

This Week's Recipe:

Chicken with Creamy Braised Leeks
From EatingWell: March/April 2011

- 8 medium or 4 large leeks
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 6 cloves garlic, halved
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (5-6 ounces each), trimmed and tenders removed (see Note)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, divided
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

Preheat oven to 425°F. Trim roots and dark green tops from leeks, leaving 5 to 6 inches of white and light green parts. Cut the leeks in half lengthwise (or in quarters, if large); rinse well. Place the leeks in a single layer in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, on their sides if necessary, nestling them together. Pour in broth; submerge the garlic and thyme in the broth between the leeks.

Bake the leeks for 40 minutes.

After about 30 minutes, sprinkle chicken with 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat; add the chicken and cook until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Remove from the heat.

After 40 minutes, remove the leeks from the oven and nestle the chicken into them. Add cream and the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt to the hot skillet (but do not turn the burner back on). Stir up any browned bits and let the cream heat up from the warmth of the pan. Pour the cream mixture over the leeks and chicken.

Return the baking dish to the oven and bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a breast registers 165°F, 10 to 15 minutes. Serve the chicken with the braised leeks, spooning the sauce over both.

Harvesting & Storing Leeks

- Leeks can be harvested and used at any size.
- Trim the dark green leaves, and use the white and pale green parts.
- Chop, then wash in cold water to remove the grit.
- Leeks can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks.

Other Points of Interest in the Garden:

- Cabbage, onions, and potatoes were harvested.
- Late tomatoes (heat-set types) were planted.
- We are seeing some tomatoes and peppers set on.
- Gooseberries are ripening, as are currants and black raspberries.

Coming Next Week—

<http://thedemogarden.org>

June 17, 2011—Leeks

Mushroom & Leek Soup with Thyme Cream

~from Epicurious.com

1/2 cup heavy cream
3 teaspoons fresh thyme, chopped
6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) unsalted butter
2 pounds crimini (baby bella) mushrooms, cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices (10 1/2 cups)
3 large leeks, white and pale green parts only, cut into 1/4-inch dice (2 1/2 cups)
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
6 cups chicken stock or canned low-sodium chicken broth
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Using electric mixer, beat cream just until soft peaks form. Fold in 2 teaspoons thyme. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours to blend flavors. (Thyme cream can be made up to 1 day ahead. If cream separates, whisk until soft peaks re-form.) Remove from refrigerator 1 hour before serving to come to room temperature.

In 4-quart stock pot over moderately high heat, heat 2 tablespoons butter until hot but not smoking. Working in 2 batches (add 2 more tablespoons butter before second batch), cook mushrooms, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, about 8 minutes. Transfer to large bowl.

In same stock pot over moderate heat, heat remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Stir in leeks, cover, and cook, stirring often, until soft, about 5 minutes. Add cooked mushrooms, sprinkle with flour, and stir until flour is evenly distributed. Stir in stock, then salt, pepper, and remaining 1 teaspoon thyme. Bring to boil, stirring often, then reduce heat to low, set lid ajar, and simmer 20 minutes. (Soup can be made up to 2 days ahead and refrigerated, covered. Reheat before serving.)

Divide soup among 8 bowls and top each portion with dollop of thyme cream. Serve immediately.

Irish Leek, Potato, & Cheese Pie

8 leeks
2 potatoes
3 tablespoons butter
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups cheese sauce
1 small clove garlic, crushed
1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
1/2 cup milk
2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons grated Cheddar cheese for topping

1 tablespoons finely chopped parsley for garnish

Wash leeks and cut into one-half-inch-thick rounds. Peel and cut up potatoes to match size of leeks. Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a casserole; add vegetables and season with salt and pepper. Cover with foil or a heavy lid and bake slowly until soft, about 1/2 hour. Make a cheese sauce by melting the two tablespoons butter and combining the flour to form a roux. Add the crushed garlic and the milk. Cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Add the cup and a half of cheese and stir until combined. Pour over vegetables, mixing well. Top with grated cheese and the chopped parsley. Heat in a 375 degree oven until heated through. Brown on top and serve.— Adapted from the Ballymaloe Cookbook

Leek, Potato & Spinach Stew

From EatingWell: May/June 2010

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
2 links hot Italian turkey sausage (6-7 ounces), casings removed
2 cups chopped leeks (about 2 leeks), white and light green parts only, rinsed well
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 cup dry white wine
1 pound new or small potatoes, halved and thinly sliced
4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
8 ounces spinach, stemmed and chopped (about 8 cups)
1 bunch scallions, sliced
1 15-ounce can cannellini beans, preferably no-salt-added, rinsed
1/2 cup chopped fresh herbs, such as dill, chervil, chives and/or parsley

Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add sausage and leeks and cook, stirring occasionally and crumbling the sausage with a wooden spoon, until the leeks are tender, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and salt and stir until fragrant, about 20 seconds. Add wine, cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Uncover and cook until the wine is almost evaporated, about 4 minutes. Add potatoes and broth; cover and bring to a boil. Stir in spinach and scallions and cook, covered, until the potatoes are tender, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in beans. Cover and let stand for 1 minute. Divide among 6 soup bowls and sprinkle each portion with herbs.