

Dinner and A Book Episode #405

Menu:

Nettle Soup
Grayling in Beer
Fidget Pie
Blueberry Flummery
Bakewell Tart
A good stout ale

Recipes:

Spring Nettle Soup

2 Tablespoons unsalted butter
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
4 cups homemade or canned chicken stock
8 ounces white button mushroom, sliced
3 medium potatoes, chopped
1-teaspoon salt
4-8 ounces nettle leaves, fresh and chopped or the same amount of fresh spinach
Freshly ground black pepper
Garnish--dollops of sour cream

Melt the butter in a 3-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 6 minutes. Add the stock, mushrooms, potatoes and salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer until the potatoes are soft, about 30 minutes. Add 2 cups fresh nettle leaves (you can find the fresh nettle leaves only in the spring. Use rubber gloves to pick, as they will sting.) In this recipe we will use fresh spinach leaves and an extract or essence of nettles. Add 2 cups fresh spinach leaves and cook. You can puree the soup in the pan using a hand wand. Serve with a dollop of sour cream.

Blueberry Flummery

1-quart blueberries (can use blackberries or strawberries)
1/2-pint (1 cup) water
1-ounce butter
1-ounce flour
4 ounces sugar
1 egg separated
1 teaspoon lemon Joyce Cream to decorate

Cook the berries in a little water until soft, and then sieve to produce a smooth puree. Allow to cool. Heat the 1/2-pint of water and the butter together in a saucepan until hot but no boiling, then remove from the heat. Mix the flour and sugar together and stir in, beating until smooth. Whisk the egg yolk into the mixture, return to the heat and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes; do not allow to boil. Stir the lemon juice into the blueberry puree and add to the mixture. Allow to cool a little. Whisk the egg white until it stand up in soft peaks and fold into the blueberry mixture. Turn into a serving dish and chill well. Whip the cream until it stand up in soft peaks and pipe on to the flummery to decorate. Serve with boudoir or cat's tongue biscuits. Serves 4.

For an evening of 17th century England be sure to use pewter dishes and mugs, decorate the table with dried flowers and herbs. Use baskets. Choose a compact disc of 17th century composer, William Boyce. Obviously you don't want to hold a plague party so forget the homespun clothes and enjoy the food, ale or nettle beer and the music of William Boyce.