

Corn and courgette soup

I made this soup several times at Chez Panisse in the late summer. It is creamy, sweet and delicious. The trick is to get a good balance between corny and courgette flavours. You might be tempted to substitute tinned corn for cobs, but please don't.



Serves: 4 as a starter or 2 for lunch

Time: 1 hour or less

4 cobs of sweet corn, husks and silky threads removed

2 litres (8½ cups) water

2 sprigs of thyme

2 stalks of parsley

a bay leaf

olive oil

1 medium onion, sliced thinly

1 small-medium green courgette, sliced

1 small-medium yellow courgette, sliced

salt

For the garnish:

30g (2 tbsps) unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ tsp finely minced parsley leaves

½ tsp finely minced chives

good pinch of chilli flakes

few drops green Tabasco sauce (if you happen to have it)

½ tsp lime juice, or to taste

salt and pepper

1. Cut corn kernels off cobs with a knife. Place cobs in a big saucepan with the water and herbs to make a corn stock. Bring to a boil and then simmer until needed. It will reduce a bit, which is fine.
2. Cook onions in some olive oil with a pinch of salt. They should go completely soft without colouring at all, so use a low heat, lay some parchment paper over the onions to trap the steam, and stir regularly.

3. When onions are totally soft, add corn kernels and a pinch of salt and cook over a low-medium heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Do not let the onions or corn colour.
4. Add courgettes to corn and onions. Lift cobs out of the stock and then pour stock through a sieve onto the vegetables. You may not want to use all the stock – just add enough so vegetables can move around easily when stirred, but are not totally swamped by liquid. Reserve remaining stock.
5. Add another good pinch of salt to the soup, bring to a boil and simmer until the courgettes are tender but still hold their shape well. Take off the heat and let cool for a few minutes.
6. While the soup is cooking you can make the compound butter garnish. Mash all of the ingredients together with a fork until well-mixed and smooth. Store in fridge until needed.
7. Puree soup in batches in a blender until totally smooth. At this point you could let the soup cool completely and then keep chilled until needed. Return soup to saucepan and bring to a simmer. Add more stock (or water) if it's too thick. Taste and add more salt if needed. Serve garnished with a dollop of the butter, which the diner can swirl into their soup.