

Mum's chilled pea soup

My mother sent me her favourite pea soup recipe in time for one of my Secret Kitchen dinners, assuring me everyone would adore it. I played with it just a bit, and the result was absolutely delicious. Thank you mum!

If you're making your own vegetable stock – simmer chopped carrots, onions, leeks and celery with bay leaves, parsley stalks, a sprig of thyme, several peppercorns and a pinch of salt for an hour or more until its flavour has really developed.

You can serve this soup hot or chilled. I like it chilled, in early summer when English peas are in season. Buy a big bag, find a friend, pour yourselves big G&Ts, and get podding. (Add the pods to the stock pot.)



Serves: 4-6

2 smallish yellow or white onions, or a bunch of spring onions

75g unsalted butter

2 cloves of garlic

a smallish bunch of fresh mint, washed and dried

1 litre chicken or vegetable stock

500g peas (freshly podded or frozen)

approx 120ml double cream

salt and pepper

approx 60ml crème fraîche

an unwaxed lemon

1. Finely chop or slice the onions and cook slowly in the butter with a pinch of salt. Yes, it is a lot of butter. Mince the garlic and finely slice most of the mint leaves and add them to the pot. Cook, stirring frequently, until the onions are soft and sweet, a good ten minutes. Don't let them colour.
2. Add the stock, season and bring to a boil.
3. Add the peas, and if needed add a little more water from the kettle so that they are *just* covered. Simmer for around five minutes or until the peas are *just* tender. Do not overcook or they will lose their bright green colour.
4. Puree the soup with an immersion blender or in batches in a jug blender until it is really smooth. Blend in the double cream and more seasoning if needed to taste. If it's too thick, add some cold water, but take care not to dilute the pea flavour too much.
5. Chill in the fridge for a few hours or overnight, and then check the seasoning again. Once cold it may need more salt.
6. Serve with a dollop of crème fraîche in each bowl, garnished with the remaining mint leaves (finely sliced) and a little lemon zest, finely grated over the top at the last minute.