

Fall / Winter

Festive Chestrut Veloute with Porcini

With three contrasting yet complementary flavors and textures, this velouté is both elegant and luxurious. Quick and easy to prepare, it makes an ideal starter for a Christmas dinner. Happy Holidays!

*Juhes* Active: 40 minutes

Cooking: 5 minutes

## Serves 12

Ingredients

- 1¼ lb. (600 g) small fresh or frozen porcini mushrooms (or button mushrooms)
- 2 celery hearts
- 20 toasted hazelnuts
- 4 cups (1 liter) My Chicken
  Broth (see recipe p. 118)
  (or 1 chicken bouillon cube
  dissolved in 4 cups/1 liter water)
- 3 lb. (1.3 kg) canned or frozen unsweetened chestnut puree (or vacuum-packed cooked whole chestnuts)
- 3 tbsp (1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> oz./50 g) lightly salted butter
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

**If you are using fresh mushrooms**, cut the base off the stems and quickly rinse the mushrooms under cold water, brushing gently to remove any dirt. Pat dry, slice, and place on paper towel. If your mushrooms are frozen, follow the thawing instructions on the package, then slice.

**Wash the celery hearts**, pat dry, and cut the stalks into thin slices. Place in an attractive bowl ready to take to the table. Chop the leaves and reserve as a garnish.

**Roughly chop** the hazelnuts. When scattered over the soup, they must retain their crunch.

In a large saucepan, bring the broth to a boil, and then working in batches, blend the chestnut puree or whole chestnuts with the hot broth, the butter, and seasoning until velvety smooth. If the soup is too thick for you, gradually add more broth or hot water to obtain the texture you prefer.

**In a large 10-in. (26-cm) skillet**, heat the olive oil over high heat until it is shimmering but not smoking. Add the mushrooms and sauté for 5 minutes, turning them over constantly with two spatulas. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper.

If necessary, reheat the velouté over very low heat, stirring with a whisk. Serve in bowls garnished with the mushrooms, celery leaves, and chopped hazelnuts. Pass around the celery slices.

## Recipes for Memorable Gatherings

## PERLA SERVAN-SCHREIBER

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