

Celery soup

Bread and soup work so well together. I use my bread almost like a spoon to soak up the soup. Just as bread goes with cheese, cheese goes with celery and the soft sharpness of this soup is the perfect partner for my Stilton and bacon rolls.

Use fresh stock, or bouillon powder or a stock cube as you wish, but if you do use a ready-made product, season the soup judiciously, as these stocks can be overly salty.

SERVES 4

500g celery (about 6 stalks), with leaves (400g trimmed weight)

1 large potato, peeled

1 large leek, trimmed and washed

40g butter

600ml vegetable stock

200ml milk

150ml double cream

Salt and white pepper

To serve

Stilton and bacon rolls (see page 37) or other good bread

Trim the celery, reserving a few leaves for garnish. Roughly chop the celery and potato and slice the leek into rings.

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over a medium-low heat. Add the prepared vegetables and stir to coat them in the butter. Cook gently for about 10 minutes to soften slightly but don't let them colour.

Pour in the stock and season with a little salt. Bring to the boil, then turn down to a simmer. Cover and cook gently for 20–25 minutes, until the vegetables are cooked.

Blitz the soup with the milk in a food processor until smooth; you may need to do this in 2 batches. Strain through a sieve into a clean pan. It really is worth doing this as it gives the soup a velvety texture.

Taste the soup at this stage and add more salt if needed and a pinch of white pepper. Reheat the soup to simmering point and stir in two-thirds of the cream.

Divide the soup between warmed bowls and garnish each portion with an extra swirl of cream and the reserved chopped celery leaves. Enjoy with Stilton and bacon rolls or other good bread.