

Potage Crème D'Asperges

Recipe by Liz the Chef

I have enjoyed making this soup to celebrate spring for more years than I care to remember. My dog-eared, stained recipe was banged out on the typewriter at my first job after college. I have made few changes over time, except to finally have easy access to shallots (a long time ago as well) and to learn to make my own chicken stock.

Serves 6 for a starter, 4 for entrée

- 1 and 1/2 pound asparagus
- 6 cups homemade chicken stock
- 1/4 pound unsalted butter, divided use
- 6 tablespoons unbleached flour
- 2 tablespoons minced shallots
- 2 egg yolks
- 3/4 cups cream
- kosher salt and ground white pepper to taste

1. Heat stock to boiling. Trim and peel asparagus. Discard stalk ends. Cut the stalks into 3/4 inch pieces and set aside. Drop tips into boiling stock for two minutes, then set aside. Pour stock into large bowl.

2. Heat 6 tablespoons butter in a large heavy-bottomed pot or 'Dutch oven'. Add the flour and stir for 2 minutes or so. Gradually whisk in the hot stock until smooth. Continue whisking until mixture has thickened. Cook for another 5 minutes on low heat while you go on to sauté the stalk-shallot mixture.

3. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons of butter in a large skillet. Once the foam reduces, add stalk pieces and shallots. Add a little salt and pepper to taste. Cook for 5 minutes, then add to simmering soup base. Cook over medium-low heat, just until asparagus is tender.

4. Purée soup in batches in a blender; return to Dutch oven.

5. Combine the egg yolks with the cream in a small bowl and gradually add the puréed soup until the egg-cream mixture is warmed. Add the egg-cream mixture to the soup, bring to a low boil and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes, also adding the reserved tips. Correct seasoning and serve.