

# Chestnut Soup for Nana

## Recipe by Liz the Chef

We lost dear Irene, my mother-in-law, a few short weeks ago. She is often in my thoughts and I want to take some time to talk about her and, yes, cook something in her honor.

Irene lived a life of service to her family and her community. When my husband was a little boy, he and his parents moved to northern Wisconsin.

His father was the only physician in their small town. Irene trained herself to serve as her husband's x-ray technician and took on many other duties in their cottage hospital.

She was involved in her church, especially the youth program, and taught her only child how to fly fish, sew, clean house and to play tennis, volleyball and baseball.

Cooking was a chore rather than anything else for my mother-in-law. Irene once described herself as an "uninspired" cook. She enjoyed her meals in our home, but rarely commented about anything I served, except to always thank me after our meal together. Her appetite was diminished and she always asked for a small portion.

One Christmas, I served this chestnut soup as a starter. The recipe is one I adapted from the November, 2003 issue of Gourmet. "Nana", as her grandchildren and family called her, exclaimed over and over how delicious her soup was! She may have even had a small second ladle...

## Serves 8 as a starter, 4 for lunch

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup celery, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup carrots, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup yellow onion, finely chopped
- 8 sprigs flat-leaved parsley
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 1 12-14 oz. jar of peeled, roasted chestnuts (about 3 cups)
- 1/4 cup Madeira wine
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- kosher salt and ground white pepper

1. Using a large, heavy-bottomed pot, such as a Dutch oven, melt the butter over low heat.

2. Add the celery, carrots and onion. Cover vegetables with a buttered round of parchment paper, buttered side down.
3. Cover pot and simmer vegetables for 15 minutes.
4. Using kitchen twine, tie together the parsley and bay leaf to make a “bouquet garni”.
5. Discard the paper from the vegetables. Add the bouquet garni and the stock. Bring to a boil.
6. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes.
7. Remove and discard the bouquet garni.
8. Coarsely chop the chestnuts and add to the soup. Add the Madiera and simmer for 10 minutes.
9. Using a blender, puree the soup in small batches. Use a large bowl to hold the pureed batches. Return pureed soup to the pot. Add the cream. Add salt and pepper to taste.
10. Reheat over medium heat before serving

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