

Take A Leek On St David's Day

Daffodils are in bloom, lambs are in the fields and what better way to celebrate St David's Day (1st March) and the start of spring than with Wales' feted national symbol, a tasty leek?

The leek has long been associated with the Welsh Saint David. In the Middle Ages when Saint David was alive, the leek was seen as healthy and virtuous with extraordinary healing qualities including purging the blood, keeping colds at bay and healing wounds.

It also acquired mystic virtues. It was claimed that girls who slept with a leek under their pillow on St David's Day would see their future husband in their dreams!

If you don't fancy putting a leek under your pillow this St David's Day, then there are plenty of other ways to enjoy this delicious British staple at the height of the season.

Why not experiment with the truly versatile leek by cooking it in all manner of ways including sautéing, stir-frying, baking, roasting, braising and even adding raw to salads.

The lovely mild, sweet, onion-like flavour and smooth texture of the British leek makes it a welcome addition to stacks of recipes – and what's more in these credit crunch times it's a cost effective but nutritious staple.

Farmer Andy Blair who helped set up *The Really Welsh Trading Company* in Wales four years ago and now grows 160 acres of Welsh leeks across Wales says, "My favourite way of eating leeks is with a traditional Sunday lunch drizzled with gravy."

So if you want to take a leek (or five) this St David's Day and cook up a feast for as little as £2 a head, then try some of these delicious seasonal recipes and have a taste of Wales in all its glory!

Chicken, Leek, Prune and Caerphilly Pie



Serves 4
Prep 25 minutes
Cook 40 minutes

Cost £5.80 (for four)

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp butter
1 Spanish onion chopped
3 cloves of garlic sliced
4 boned chicken thighs cubed
200g leeks sliced, white parts only
2tbs flour
150ml dry white wine
1pint chicken stock
200ml double cream
2 tsp English mustard
Salt and black pepper to taste
100g prunes halved
150g Caerphilly cheese crumbled
50g mixed chopped tarragon and flat leaf parsley

500g ready rolled puff pastry
1 egg yolk
1 tablespoon of double cream

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C / 350°F
2. In a medium sized saucepan melt the butter and oil then fry the onions and garlic until they start to colour, about 10 minutes
3. Then add the chicken and cook for a further 5 minutes until the chicken is sealed
4. Add the leeks and flour stirring continually until they are well combined
5. Add the wine and chicken stock slowly until the sauce has thickened
6. Add the cream and mustard and then season

7. Take off the heat and stir in the prunes, cheese and herbs
8. Place the pie filling into a medium sized pie dish
9. Mix the egg yolk and cream together and then brush around the pie dish.
Cover with pastry and cut around the sides with a knife
10. Brush the remaining egg mix over the pie
11. Poke a couple of small holes in the pastry to let out the steam
12. Cook in the oven for 25 minutes, remove from the oven and serve

Leek, Smoked Chicken, Broad Bean and Savoy Soup



Serves 4

Prep 10 minutes

Cook 20 minutes

Cost £5.40 (for four)

Ingredients

2tbs olive oil
 1 medium white onion finely chopped
 1 garlic clove peeled and finely chopped
 200g sliced leeks
 100g shelled broad beans
 100g shredded Savoy cabbage
 1L chicken stock
 200g shredded smoked chicken
 Salt and cracked black pepper
 Small bunch of flat leaf parsley roughly chopped
 Extra virgin olive oil

1 Small rustic loaf

Method

1. Over a low heat in a medium sized saucepan, fry the onion, garlic and leeks in the olive oil. Cook until soft, about 10 minutes
2. Add the chicken stock and bring to the boil. Add the broad beans, Savoy cabbage and smoked chicken and cook for a further 5 minutes
3. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Serve in warmed bowls with extra virgin olive oil and bread

Sausage and Leek Casserole with Chive Mash



Serves 4
Prep 10 minutes
Cook 30 minutes

Cost £6 (for four)

Ingredients

3 tbsp olive oil
8 pork sausages
1 Spanish onion sliced
200g sliced leeks
4 cloves garlic sliced
2 sticks celery sliced
Small bunch of sage leaves, picked
200ml white wine
400ml passata
400ml chicken
2 bay leaves
Salt and cracked black pepper
Small bunch flat leaf parsley, chopped

For the mash...

800g potatoes peeled and cut into 4
100g butter
300ml full fat milk
Salt and cracked white pepper
1 bunch of chives finely chopped

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C / 350°F
2. Fry the sausages in a casserole dish until golden brown, remove with a slotted spoon. You may need to do this in two batches
3. Add the onions, leeks, garlic, celery and sage and cook until the mix starts to brown slightly
4. Add the wine, stock, passata and bay leaves and then season with salt and pepper
5. Add the sausages back in

6. Put the lid on and cook in the oven for 20 minutes
7. Meanwhile, place your potatoes in a medium sized pan, cover with water and bring to the boil. Simmer gently until cooked. About 20 minutes
8. Once cooked, drain and mash the potatoes and add the butter and milk. Stir over a low heat until the butter has melted and the mash is piping hot. Season and add the chives. Set aside
9. Remove the casserole from oven, stir in chopped parsley and serve with the mash

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