

Vichyssoise Cream Soup

A cold soup that has warmed many hearts is Vichyssoise (pronounced “vish-e-swaz)! This French-styled soup is thick because it is made with pureed onions, leeks, potatoes, cream, and chicken broth! The soup is commonly served cold but may also be eaten hot.

Many people have never even heard of this cold, creamy soup, but it is delicious. And it's always fun to learn how to make new recipes.

Vichyssoise was founded in America, although it has a French name! The soup was named after the French city of Vichy. It was made by Chef Louis Diat in 1917, as he was working at the Ritz-Carlton, New York. Louis remembered how they cooled their mom’s leek and potato soup using cold milk, adding more flavor to the soup! So Louis took after this memory to come up with Vichyssoise for diners at the Ritz Carlton!

The blend of leek, potato, onions, chicken broth, and cream makes it a healthy and filling option for an evening snack or dinner! It is an easy recipe with simple ingredients that suit well for any occasion. However, since it is traditionally a cold soup, it is best reserved for summer days!

You have probably seen leeks in the produce section. They resemble a giant green onion with its bright white stalk and its long, overlapping green leaves. Leeks are in the same family as garlic, shallots, and onions. They are rich in B vitamins and antioxidants. Leeks have a sweet, oniony flavor that adds depth to soups, eggs, stews, pastas, and other dishes!

Selecting Leeks

It is essential to choose smaller leeks with dark green leaves that are firm and blemish-free. Also, look closely to be sure the roots of the leeks are light in color and pliable. Signs of dark, dried, or wrinkled leaves and roots mean they are not fresh.

Storing

Keep fresh leeks in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for a week or two. Before placing leeks in the plastic bag, be sure they are kept whole, unwashed, and wrapped in a damp paper towel. Store the leeks in the plastic bag inside the crisper drawer.

Preparation

To prepare the leeks for cooking, it is important to thoroughly wash the grit from inside the layers of leaves that accumulates while they grow partially underground. Leeks should be rinsed in a colander and soaked in water to dislodge dirt. Use your hands to agitate the soaking leeks to dislodge any dirt that may be clinging to them. Then, trim off the roots and the dark green tops of the leaves. Peel away any wilted or discolored layers and discard them. Last, you can quarter or half the leek stalk lengthwise and make cuts in the parts of the leeks you plan to cook; unless you are cooking it whole, then you should leave the root end intact. After the leeks have been cut and rinsed, they need to be used right away as they will only stay fresh for 2-3 days in a sealed container.

Many recipes use the light green part, just above the white bulb of the leek. This part of the leek has a sweet flavor and crunch. The dark green parts of the leek also have a good flavor and can be tenderized by cooking methods or work great when making soup stock from scratch.

Once you understand how to select, prepare, and store fresh leeks, you are ready to use them in recipes. Try making vichyssoise from scratch at home with this simple but delicious recipe adapted from Anthony Bourdain. <https://www.food.com/recipe/anthony-bourdains-les-halles-vichyssoise-136057>

First, in a large, heavy-bottom pot, melt 4 tablespoons of butter over medium-low heat. Once butter is melted, add 8 sliced leeks and cook for 5 minutes. Then, add 2 cubed potatoes and cook for a minute or two, stirring a few times. Then, stir in 2 cups of chicken broth and bring to a boil. Reduce to low heat and let it simmer for 35 minutes.

Once leeks and potatoes are soft, allow the soup to cool for a few minutes. Once it cools, pour the soup into a blender and puree the soup at high speed. Once pureed, return soup to the cooking pot and whisk in 2 cups of heavy cream and a pinch of nutmeg. Season with salt and pepper. Return to a boil, reduce to simmer, and cook 5 minutes. Once cooked for those five minutes, transfer soup to the mixing bowl and chill over the ice bath, stirring occasionally.

When the soup is at room temperature, cover it in plastic wrap and put it into the refrigerator to cool.