

Creamed Spinach with Nutmeg

From Notes from a Maine Kitchen (Down East Books, 2011) by Kathy Gunst

This recipe has a long legacy in our family, beginning with my father who never loved vegetables but adored creamed spinach. During the holidays we make it with heavy cream and freshly ground nutmeg; over the years, I've lightened it up a bit. Instead of heavy cream I substitute local yogurt, or a thick Greek-style yogurt. If you don't have either of those you can take plain yogurt and place it in a tightly meshed sieve for an hour or so until much of the liquid is released and drained and you're left with a thick yogurt mixture. Look for whole nutmeg and a little nutmeg grater (or you can use the very tiny holes on a box cheese grater); it makes a huge difference. You can easily double or triple the recipe to serve a larger crowd.

About 2 tablespoons olive oil

1 pound fresh spinach or baby spinach, washed and thoroughly dried (if stems are very thick and long they can be removed)

2 to 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg, or more

1/2 cup heavy cream or plain regular or low-fat yogurt

TIP: You can also add all kinds of different spices: add a dash of cardamom, allspice, chile flakes, or cayenne.

In a large skillet heat 1/2 tablespoon of the oil over high heat. Add half the garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add half the spinach and cook, stirring, for about 2 to 3 minutes, or until wilted but not necessarily cooked through. Remove to a bowl. Add another tablespoon of the oil and add the remaining garlic and cook 30 seconds. Add the remaining spinach and sauté in the same manner; seasoning with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Place in the bowl.

Chop the spinach (some like it finely chopped and others coarsely chopped) or if using baby spinach leave it whole.

Add the cream (or yogurt) to the hot skillet and cook over low heat. The heavy cream needs to reduce to be thick enough to coat a spoon; let simmer about 3 to 4 minutes. The yogurt simply needs to heat through and thin out a little; cook about 2 minutes. Add the spinach, more salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste and stir well to make sure the spinach is well coated with the cream or yogurt.

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