

Creamed Spinach with Yogurt and Nutmeg

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

This has been a family favorite for years, beginning with my father who never loved vegetables but adored cream spinach. During the holidays we make it with heavy cream and freshly ground nutmeg but 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, delicious yogurt mixture. Also try to buy 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.

Ingredients:

2 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1 pound fresh spinach or baby spinach, washed and thoroughly dried

2 to 3 cloves finely chopped garlic

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

About 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg*

About 1/2 cup yogurt, see head note, or heavy cream

**You can also 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 spinach and cook, stirring, for about 2 to 3 minutes, or until wilted but not necessarily cooked through. Remove to a chopping board. Add another tablespoon of oil and sauté the remaining spinach in the same manner; remove to the chopping board.

Chop the spinach (some like it finely chopped and others coarsely chopped).

Add the remaining 1 1/2 tablespoons oil to the skillet over moderate heat. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for about 10 seconds. Add the chopped spinach, salt, pepper, and nutmeg stirring well and cook 1 minute. Add the yogurt (or cream), stirring it into the spinach, and let cook over low heat for about 5 minutes, or until slightly thickened and hot. Taste for seasoning, adding more salt, pepper, or nutmeg if needed. (The spinach can be served hot from the skillet or placed in a small casserole and refrigerated for several hours. Reheat in a preheated 350 degree oven for about 10 minutes, or until bubbling and hot throughout).

Serves 4.