



Cream of wild mushroom soup served with Stilton toast

A hearty starter, or even a light meal in itself, this soup and cheese combination is just perfect on a cold day.

Start by frying the chopped thyme, garlic and onion in a little oil until the onion is translucent. Add chopped field mushrooms and 'sweat' them down for a minute or two. Pour in the Madeira and light with a match to flame the pan.

Add chicken stock, or vegetable stock if you prefer, until the mushrooms are covered. Cook for 10 minutes at most.

Remember that the more you cook, the more flavour you lose. You may find the mushrooms are tender after just five minutes. As soon as they are done, transfer to a blender and blend until smooth.

Return the mix to the pan, add double cream, salt and pepper, and stir in. Heat through before serving.

To garnish, fry a small quantity of sliced wild mushrooms until crisp. We've used chanterelle and trumpet mushrooms, but you can use whatever are available. Float these on the surface of the soup and drizzle round them a couple of rings of double extra virgin olive oil.

Bake the Stilton on long slices of rye bread in a hot oven until it is starting to melt. Serve alongside.

Recommended wine: Lustau Puerto Fino sherry

Ingredients

Serves four

Field mushrooms - 1 kilo

Shallot - 1 large

Garlic - 2 cloves

Thyme - 2 sprigs

Unsalted Butter - 2 tbsps

Vegetable oil - 2 tbsps

Chicken stock - 1 litre

Double cream - 200ml

Madeira - 50ml

Stilton cheese - 200g

Rye bread - 1 large loaf

