

Salt and Serenity

Green Spring Soup (Asparagus and Green Pea Soup)

Serves 4-6

Soup:

2 leeks, white and light green part
2 bunches asparagus
2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, grated on microplane grater
1-2 teaspoons kosher salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional
4 cups frozen peas
6 cups vegetable stock

Toasted Bread Crumbs:

½ loaf sourdough or other hearty artisanal bread
3 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon kosher salt

Garnish:

¼ cup chopped fresh chives
½ cup 35% cream
Flaky sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Thinly slice leeks into circles. Fill large bowl with cold water. Add leeks to water and swish vigorously with your hands to remove any dirt from leeks. Scoop leeks out of bowl. Discard sandy water.

Wash asparagus. Trim off woody ends. Cut asparagus stalks into 2 inch pieces. Set aside tips to be used for garnish if desired.

Heat a large saucepan over medium heat. Add olive oil. Add leeks and garlic and sauté over medium heat for 6-8 minutes until leeks are tender. Add salt, pepper and red pepper flakes, if using. Add 5 cups of vegetable stock. Reserve last cup of stock for thinning out soup at the end, if needed. Bring liquid to a boil.

Add frozen peas and asparagus. Turn heat down to low, cover pot and simmer for 15 minutes, until asparagus is very tender.

While soup is cooking, preheat oven to 350° F. Tear bread into 1 inch chunks. Process in food processor until the bread is coarsely ground. You are not looking for fine

breadcrumbs. Aim for a pebbly texture. Mix breadcrumbs with olive oil and salt and place on baking sheet. Toast in oven for about 15 minutes, until golden brown. Puree soup in blender. You will need to do this in about 3 batches. Only fill blender $\frac{1}{3}$ full with each batch. Pour pureed soup through a wire mesh sieve to get a velvety smooth texture. Can be made a day ahead and chilled. Reheat before serving.

If you reserved the asparagus tips for garnish, drop them into salted boiling water for 2-3 minutes. Drain and refresh in ice cold water to retain their vibrant green colour.

Spoon soup into bowls. Drizzle with a bit of cream. Top with chopped chives. Serve with toasted breadcrumbs and salt and pepper on the side to let everyone add as much as they want.