

Recipe: Parsnip soup (soupe de panais)

This easy parsnip soup makes use of a neglected vegetable, and is made extra-filling with the addition of chunky croûtons. Add Gruyère cheese for a touch of luxury..

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 600g/1lb 5oz parsnips, cut into 1cm/½-inch cubes
- ½ tsp dried red chilli flakes, plus extra to serve
- 1 litre/1¾ pints hot vegetable stock
- 200ml/7fl oz double cream
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the croûtons

- 3 thick slices good bread, such as sourdough, cut into 2.5cm/1 inch pieces
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 55g/2oz Gruyère cheese, finely grated (optional)

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C.
2. Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Add the garlic and parsnips and fry for 4–5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until coloured. Add the chilli and fry for 1 minute.
3. Pour in the stock, stir and bring to a simmer. Cook with the lid on for 12–15 minutes, or until the parsnips are tender.
4. Meanwhile, for the croûtons, put the bread on a baking tray in a single layer and drizzle with the oil. Sprinkle over the cheese, if using, and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 5–10 minutes, or until crisp and golden.
5. Remove the soup from the heat and blitz with a stick blender until smooth. Return to the heat, stir in the cream and heat through.
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve the soup topped with the croûtons and a sprinkling of chilli flakes if you wish.