

PATE AUX POMMES DE TERRE

Serves 8

A wonderfully satisfying dish from the Auvergne that goes down equally well in the Cape ... specifically during the wet winter months.

2 rolls puff pastry, defrosted
1 egg, separated
8 leeks, sliced in pennies and washed
50 ml extra virgin olive oil
50 ml butter
16 medium sized potatoes, cooked and peeled
175 gr salad onions, chopped
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
750 ml creme fraiche

Preheat the oven to 200degrees/GAS 6 .

Completely line a well greased loose bottomed cake tin with one sheet of puff pastry. Prick the pastry with a fork before covering it with a thin film of eggwhite. This prevents the pastry from becoming soggy during the baking process.

Heat the olive oil and butter in a saucepan. Once the butter starts foaming, add the leeks and lightly fry them until they are tender. Keep aside. In a large bowl, slice the potatoes into thin even rings. Season well. Gently toss the leeks with half of the creme fraiche into the potatoes. Spoon the potato mixture into the pastry shell. Cover the mixture with the other sheet of pastry, taking care to tuck it in neatly. Prick lightly with a sharp knife to allow the steam to escape. Brush with some egg yolk to ensure a lovely caramel coloured crust.

Bake for about 45 minutes or until the pastry has puffed out beautifully and is completely cooked.

In the meantime, in a bowl, gently stir the chopped salad onions into the remaining creme fraiche. Season.

Remove the pate au pomme de terre from the oven and the cake tin. Taking care not to burn, gently lift the top of the crust off the pie. Some skill and/or help is needed! Spoon the cold creme fraiche mixture onto the top of the potatoes, return the top crust and serve immediately with a crisp green salad with heaps of avocado!
This goes fantastically well with a glass of Sauvignon Blanc.

SPICY LAMB SHOULDER WITH BASIL AND AUBERGINE CAVIAR

This is a perfect main course that I love to serve with a creamy helping of aubergine caviar. Utterly sumptuous!

Serves 4

1 shoulder of lamb
 125 ml extra virgin olive oil
 1 T sea salt
 1 T coriander seeds
 1 T fennel seeds
 1 t freshly ground black pepper
 500 ml chicken or lamb stock
 6 garlic cloves, peeled
 500 ml fresh basil, chopped

Grind the salt, coriander seeds, fennel and black pepper to a fine powder in a mortar with a pestle. Add the olive oil to the spicy mix before rubbing it into the shoulder of lamb. And use your fingers!

Bake the shoulder in a covered oven dish at 180 degrees/gas 4 for about 2 hours or until succulently tender. Remove from the pan and keep warm. Using a medium sized pot, add the pan juices and garlic cloves to the stock and bring to a rapid boil. Reduce until it has a saucy quality. Add the chopped basil to the sauce and serve immediately.

This is wonderful with a shiraz...

Aubergine caviar

3 medium aubergines, whole
 2 T olive oil
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped
 4 salad onions, finely chopped
 juice of 1 lemon
 2 T flat-leaf parsley, chopped
 250 ml creme fraiche
 sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Prick the aubergines all over with a fork and rub them with olive oil before cooking them in the oven at about 200 c/400 f/ Gas 6 for 15 to 20 minutes, until they are completely tender. Remove from the oven, let them cool down a bit - for all the obvious reasons - and then cut them in half and scoop the flesh out of the skins into a mixing bowl. Add the garlic, salad onions, lemon juice, parsley and creme fraiche, and gently fold all the ingredients together. Season to taste and serve with the shoulder of lamb.