

Easy-to-prepare meals and accompanying drinks

Celeriac Soup With Sage Butter

BY RACHEL
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CELERICAC SOUP HAS SUCH A RICH FLAVOUR and silky texture, it tastes a million miles away from any of your usual post-Christmas diet dishes. Instead, it's a healthy meal without a hint of deprivation.

If you're feeling particularly pious, then it's delicious on its own. Personally I think that any bowl of soup tastes best with a hunk of bread and any nubbins leftover from the cheeseboard. Celeriac pairs particularly well with Stilton. Add a bit of chutney, and I struggle to think of a more perfect lunch.

Serves 6

- 20g butter
- 2 onions, roughly diced
- 750g celeriac, peeled and roughly diced
- 1.5L vegetable stock
- 2 cooking apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 1-2tbsp crème fraîche
- Salt and pepper, to season
- 40g butter
- 2-3 sprigs of sage leaves, picked

1. Melt the butter in a pan or casserole dish.
2. Sweat the onions and add the chunks of celeriac. Cook until the onions are soft and the celeriac is starting to take on a golden-caramel colour.
3. Pour the vegetable stock into the pan and cook at a rapid



simmer for 10 minutes, until the celeriac is soft enough that a knife pokes through the chunks without any resistance. Add the sliced apples and cook for 2 more minutes.

4. Blend. Stir in the crème fraîche, and season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Melt the butter in a pan until foaming and then add the sage leaves. Let the butter bubble away on a low-medium heat, swirling it in the pan until it turns a golden brown—but absolutely no darker. The sage leaves should have started to become nice and crisp.
6. Divide the soup between 6 bowls. Garnish with the crispy sage leaves and drizzle a teaspoon of sage butter round each garnish. Serve straight away, ideally accompanied with a hunk of bread and crumbly Stilton.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM & ZOE HILL

TIP...

Why not try experimenting with the garnish? Instead of using sage butter, more carnivorous cooks might try bacon lardons, or even crumbled black pudding. Roasted nuts will also add some crunch and a lovely flavour.

Hot Toddy

My mother swears by lemon, honey and a slug of rum to cure ills, while my in-laws prescribe a whisky toddy. In the middle of flu season, a late-night nip occasionally takes on a truly medicinal quality.

There's a long tradition of the curative cocktail, dating back to ancient Egypt and China when alcohol was used to treat anything from a snake bite to intestinal worms. Spirits have formed the base of apothecaries' concoctions throughout medical history and many popular brands (such as *Bénédictine* and *Chartreuse*) started life as medicinal elixirs mixed by monks.

It's still best to turn to aspirin before absinthe when struck down by a lurgy, but that doesn't mean that there's no truth to home remedies. "The alcohol dilates blood vessels a little bit, making it easier for your mucus membranes to deal with the



infection," explains Dr William Schaffner, chair of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Centre. Combine the decongestant powers of whisky or rum with the heat of a "toddy", which helps unblock blocked noses, and it starts to make sense.

To make, simply mix together one shot of your chosen spirit with a shot of water, 2tsp of honey and 2tsp of lemon, and heat gently.

Moderation is the key to self-prescribing from the drinks cabinet—and check with your GP if you're on medication—but I'm sure I'm not alone in finding more charm in a weak whisky toddy than a pack of pills.

CURATIVE DRINKS

- **The King's Ginger (41%),** £22/500ml, Waitrose
- **Dom Bénédictine (40%),** £17/500ml, Morrisons
- **Taste the Difference Armagnac (40%),** £22/500ml, Sainsbury's



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Pears Poached In Mulled Wine

Another handy recipe for using up Christmas leftovers—in this case, mulled wine spices and that lingering bottle of red.

- 6 pears, stalks attached, peeled
 - 1 bottle of red wine
 - 150g sugar
 - 2tbsp shop-bought mulled wine spices. Alternatively, use a home blend of orange peel, a cinnamon stick, 2 cloves and 2 star anise
- To serve: whipped cream or mascarpone

1. Pour the wine, sugar and spice into a small pan.
2. Submerge the pears and simmer for 35–40 minutes, until tender.
3. Lift the pears out of the pan and rapidly simmer the poaching liquid until it starts to turn syrupy.
4. Serve each pear with 1–2tbsp of the thickened poaching liquid and a dollop of whipped cream or mascarpone. ■

BOOK



***Salt is Essential*, Kyle Books, £17.** Shaun Hill's tome is witty, informative and filled with classic recipes.

BARGAIN



3.3L casserole dish, Sainsbury's, £35. Sturdy and made for some serious soup-making.

BLOW OUT



Touchscreen soup maker, Lakeland, £124.99. It chops, blends, sautés, cooks and simmers, all in one jug.