



The Thrill of the Chill

I'M SITTING NEAR the window watching the snow eddy and the branches on the trees shimmy and shake. The radio is telling me (every eight minutes) that the wind from the north is reaching speeds of 40 miles per hour and the rapidly declining temperature is causing slippery conditions on the sidewalks and roads.

I'm huddled in a heavy sweatshirt trying to keep myself from nudging the thermostat a little higher. Who wants to see that arrow pointing up on the electric bill telling me I'm not doing as well as my neighbors in energy consumption? My neighbors have flown south for the winter, but still.... It's evidently a competition, and I'm not winning.

These frigid conditions, painful as they are for me, nevertheless are causing a real boost for certain winter hardy vegetables. During this frosty season a plant's starch turns to sugar. And this sugar, in turn, protects the plant's cells from ice crystals. A natural antifreeze is protecting carrots, parsnips, broccoli, and a host of other vegetables, making them all the


sweeter for our consumption. I contemplate adding another layer to my bulky costume as I listen to the wind howl, then decide it's a perfect time to make something warm, sweet, and as comforting as that blanket I was eyeing earlier. I opened my refrigerator. I had lots of carrots. Lots. 



PHOTO: GIRMANTAS URBONAS

KATHY HARRISON is a Barrington Hills resident who teaches the fine art of cooking. For more information, call 847-381-4828.

Charred Broccoli with Mustard Breadcrumbs

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large bunch broccoli, cut lengthwise into strips
- Grapeseed or Canola oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 t. Dijon mustard
- 1 t. thyme leaves
- 1 t. chopped parsley

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Heat a grill pan or large skillet over high heat for 1 minute. Coat with oil and place the broccoli spears, cut side down on the pan. Allow to sear on the bottom without stirring for about 1-2 minutes. Turn and sear on the other side for 30 seconds more. Season with salt and pepper. Remove to a platter and top with mustard breadcrumbs.

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Curried Carrot and Turnip Soup

INGREDIENTS:

6 cups, plus 2 Tbs.
chicken stock, divided

3 medium carrots,
peeled and cut into ½
inch slices

3 small turnips, peeled
and cut into ½ inch
cubes*

3 Tbs. unsalted butter

1 large onion, peeled
and diced

1 Tbs. dark brown sugar

1 t. curry powder

1/8 t. ground coriander

1/8 t. nutmeg

2 Tbs. flour

½ cup heavy cream or milk

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

Chopped parsley or cilantro, for garnish (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large saucepan, combine 6 cups chicken stock with the carrots and turnips. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, partially covered, until the vegetables are very tender, about 30 minutes. Cool slightly, then place in a food processor and process until smooth.
2. In the same pot, melt the butter over low heat. Add the onion, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and cook until soft, but not brown. Add brown sugar, curry powder, coriander, and nutmeg. Add in the flour and stir to combine. Add the 2 remaining tablespoons chicken stock and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes. Be careful not to burn the sugar.
3. Add the vegetable puree, reduce the heat, and whisk in the cream or milk. Heat, but do not boil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls and garnish with chopped parsley or cilantro, if desired. Serves 6.

Note: I only recently began cooking turnips. I originally bought them at a farmers' market because they were little and looked cute. Now I buy them because they're delicious. If you don't have turnips, you can make this soup with double the amount of carrots. Enjoy!

Mustard Breadcrumbs

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place the breadcrumbs in a bowl.
2. Heat a small pan over medium heat for 1 minute. Add butter and when it foams, whisk in the mustard, thyme, and parsley. Remove from heat and let cool for 5 minutes.
3. Pour the mustard mixture over the breadcrumbs and combine well. Place the breadcrumbs on a small baking sheet and place in the oven until golden brown, about 10 minutes.



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