



ANSON MILLS

Soft Polenta Verdure

Yield

4 to 6 first course portions

Time

About 1 hour

Cooking Remarks

The curling tops of garlic plants, garlic scapes are usually trimmed away to give the plant more energy to produce heads. Peeled and cooked, garlic scapes are sweet to eat as well, with a delicate garlic lilt and a texture not unlike a tender green bean.

Begin cooking the polenta once most of the vegetables have been blanched and chilled. While the polenta simmers, finish up the vegetables, sauté the pancetta, and ready ingredients for the sauce.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a large pot, a large bowl, a couple of quarts of ice, a baking sheet, paper towels, a wire or mesh skimmer, a vegetable peeler, a medium skillet, and a whisk.

Ingredients

2½ pounds fresh fava beans in their pods

Fine sea salt

1 pound English peas in their pods

8 ounces slender green beans

4 long, plump garlic scapes

2 ounces pancetta, diced fine

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 recipe Soft Fine Polenta, just cooked, seasoned, and buttered, but made with only

0.5 ounce (2 tablespoons) Parmesan Reggiano

2 ounces fresh ricotta cheese or mascarpone cheese

Freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup of a young, forward white wine with good acidity

¼ cup Ultimate Vegetable Stock or Rich Homemade Chicken Stock

3 tablespoons minced fresh chives

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of salt. Place a large bowl of iced water in the sink. Line a baking sheet with several thicknesses of paper towels. Shell the fava beans (you should have about 1 cup) and blanch them in the boiling water just until they turn bright green, about 10 seconds. Using a wire or mesh skimmer, transfer the beans to the iced water. Let them chill for about 30 seconds, and then transfer to the prepared

baking sheet. Pop each of the fava beans out of its hull; discard the hulls and reserve the firm, bright bean center. Shell the English peas (you should have about 1 cup) and blanch, chill, and remove them to the baking sheet just as you did the fava beans. Trim the green beans on the bias into ¼-inch pieces (you should have about 1 cup). Blanch them until just tender, chill in the iced water, and transfer to the baking sheet with favas and peas. Trim the garlic scapes, peel them with a vegetable peeler, and cut the scapes on the bias into ⅛-inch pieces. Blanch until just tender, chill in the iced water, and transfer to the baking sheet with the other vegetables. Set the vegetables aside.

2. Render the pancetta in a medium skillet over low heat, stirring frequently, until crisp and brown, about 10 minutes. Leaving the pancetta in the skillet, pour off most of the fat. Add a teaspoon or so of the butter to the skillet and set it aside off heat.

3. Whisk the ricotta or mascarpone cheese into the hot polenta. Taste for seasoning. Cover and keep warm.

4. Return the skillet with the pancetta to medium-high heat. Add the blanched vegetables and toss them in the fat to warm. Add the wine and stock, increase the heat to high, and bring to a simmer. Simmer until the liquid is reduced by half, about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Whisk in the remaining butter and reduce the sauce until it coats the back of a spoon, about 2 minutes more. Taste for seasoning. Spoon the polenta into bowls, garnish with vegetables and sauce, and sprinkle with chives. Serve right away.