

FOOD52

Asparagus & Green Garlic Soup w/ Parmesan Croutons

By coffeefoodwrite

Green garlic is just starting to show up in our little local markets and this soup is one I make every year about this time. This vibrant green soup is earthy and subtle and the green garlic adds a nice fragrant kick without being overwhelming. Try to find a good fruity olive oil to drizzle over top (something not too acidic or biting...something smooth) -- it really adds a layer of richness without being heavy. (I used Montebello Organic Extra Virgin which has an acidity below 5%) P.S. If you can't find green garlic you can substitute a few cloves of regular garlic, chopped and sauteed until translucent...

Serves 2 For the Asparagus Green Garlic Soup:

- 1 bunch asparagus (about 28 spears)
- 3 stems green garlic (w/ bulbs about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch round)
- sea salt
- 9 sprigs fresh thyme (plus more for garnish)
- Parmesan Croutons (see recipe below)
- olive oil (for cooking)
- your very best olive oil (for drizzling)
- 1 cup chicken stock (homemade or I like Wolfgang Puck's organic)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white wine

1. Wash, dry and cut off thick bottom stems of asparagus. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with sea salt and black pepper, distribute oil evenly and thoroughly throughout spears using either your hands or tongs and roast in 425 degree oven for about 9 minutes (until bright green and tender).
2. Thinly slice whites of garlic and chop greens.
3. Sauté whites and greens of garlic (reserving a few greens for garnish) with a sprinkling of sea salt in a little olive oil until whites are tender and almost translucent.
4. Sauté roasted asparagus in a little olive oil to heat through and soften further (but make sure still bright green). (Note: You do this because the roasting of the asparagus adds an extra layer of flavor, but if you leave them in the oven long enough to soften them up, then ends become dark and the color dims -- you want a bright green beautiful soup...)
5. In a blender add asparagus, garlic and oils from both pans and chicken stock. Blend on high until thick and somewhat smooth.
6. Pour into saucepan over low to med-low heat (make sure it just gently warms through and does not boil so that you do not lose color).
7. Chop thyme and add to soup along with the white wine. Stir and let slowly warm through (about 10-12 mins.). Adjust salt and pepper as necessary.
8. Meanwhile make croutons (below)
9. Ladle into bowls, garnish with a little chopped green garlic, a sprig of thyme, a drizzle of your very best (fruity) olive oil and a few parmesan croutons. Enjoy!
10. Note: Healthy Version: Omit croutons...

For Parmesan Croutons::

- 1 round rustic bread (about 5" in diameter)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 - 3 tablespoons fresh grated parmesan
 - salt
 - fresh ground pepper
1. Cut bread in half lengthwise and then cut into about 1 inch squares.
 2. Melt olive oil and butter in medium saucepan over medium heat.
 3. Turn heat up to medium high, add bread squares, generously sprinkle with salt and pepper (you want them to be a little more salty than usual to counter the mild subtle earthy flavor of the soup) and brown over medium high until lightly browned.
 4. Turn heat down to medium sprinkle with the cheese over the croutons, let brown, turn over, sprinkle with the rest of the cheese; let brown and then immediately remove to a plate to cool. (Cheese tends to cook quickly and burn so make sure you take them off right away after they are toasty-brown).