



Chilled Cucumber Mint Soup

The combination of cucumbers and yogurt is a classic Balkan and Middle Eastern pairing. Here, we make use of the creaminess and soothing coolness in a chilled summer soup which requires no cooking. Take it along in a chilled thermos for a picnic pick-me-up, or serve it as we do in frosted glasses with springs of mint as a garnish.

4 servings

Ingredients

2 medium cucumbers
½ cup walnut pieces, toasted
1 garlic clove, very finely minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 tablespoons water
Juice of 1 lemon
1 ½ cups thick Greek style yogurt (or 2 cups regular plain yogurt)
½ cup parsley
¼ cup fresh mint leaves, chopped
salt and pepper, to taste
mint sprigs, for garnish

Preparation

Strain the yogurt:

If using regular yogurt, place it in a fine mesh strainer lined with cheesecloth set over a bowl to drain for 20 to 30 minutes. If using Greek style yogurt, omit this step.

Prepare the cucumber soup:

While the yogurt strains, toast the walnuts in a dry skillet over medium heat until they become toasted and the oils begin to develop.

[Chef's Note: You will notice an aroma when the walnuts are toasted. Be watchful, as they will go from toasted to burnt in a matter of a few moments.]

Peel the cucumbers, slice them in half and scrape out the seeds with a small spoon. Cut the flesh into 1-inch pieces. Place the garlic clove in a food processor and pulse briefly until puréed. Add half of the cucumber along with the walnuts, parsley and half the mint and pulse until the mixture becomes a smooth purée. Add the oil and a little water, and pulse again to incorporate. Scrape down the sides as necessary.

Add the remaining cucumber to the blender or processor with a pinch of salt and the lemon juice. Pulse briefly. The soup should be relatively smooth, with a few remaining small pieces of cucumber for texture. Scrape the purée into a large bowl and stir in the yogurt to blend. Season the soup to taste with salt and pepper and add a little more lemon juice, if desired.

Cover with plastic wrap and chill in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes, or until chilled. Taste and adjust for seasoning and consistency, if necessary.

July 2006

Service

Keep chilled in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Ladle into chilled bowls and garnish with mint leaves. For a more elegant presentation, we like to chill martini glasses in the freezer, then, just prior to service, pour the soup into the frosted glasses and garnish with a sprig of mint or a slice of cucumber on the rim of the glass.

Copyright © 2006 The Gilded Fork™. Recipe by Mark Tafoya. All rights reserved.

July 2006