

Spring Vegetable Minestra

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Just as I was giving up on soup... this came along - loving this recipe from @Juliaastro

SERVES 4

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra to serve
1 tbsp unsalted butter
3 eschalots (French shallots), finely diced
125g flat pancetta, rind removed and cut into lardons
3 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
150g vialone nano, carnaroli or other risotto rice
150ml dry white wine
2 bunches asparagus, trimmed
200g fresh or frozen peas (I only had frozen corn + peas - so I used these.) (or 600g fresh peas in their pods, if using)
finely grated zest of a lemon
large handful flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
sea salt and black pepper, to taste
grated parmigiano reggiano, to serve

FOR THE CHICKEN STOCK

700g chicken wings
2 carrots, halved
3 celery stalks, halved
1 onion, halved
2 fresh bay leaves
5 peppercorns
1 tsp sea salt

1. To make the chicken stock, place all of the ingredients into a large pot + cover with cold water. Bring to a simmer over a high heat, skimming any impurities as they rise to the surface. Reduce the heat to low- medium + simmer gently for 1-1½ hours or until the stock is well-flavoured. If necessary, top with extra water to ensure the chicken is always covered. Strain and keep 1.5 litres of the stock hot. Any extra stock can be stored in the refrigerator for three days or frozen for three months.

2. Heat the olive oil and butter in a large pot over a medium heat. When the butter starts to foam, add the eschalots + pancetta + cook for 7-8 minutes or until the eschalots are just beginning to colour + most of the fat has rendered from the pancetta. Stir often to prevent the eschalots burning. Add the garlic + cook for 1-2 minutes, or until fragrant. Scatter in the rice + stir to coat, cooking it until it begins to toast, then deglaze with the wine. When almost all of the wine has been absorbed, pour in the hot stock + stir well. Bring to a simmer and cook for 12-14 minutes or until the rice is tender, stirring occasionally.

3. While the rice is cooking, slice the asparagus spears into 5mm rounds, stopping before you reach the tips, keeping them whole. Add the peas + asparagus to the pot and cook until tender + vibrant (about 2-3 minutes). Finally, stir through the lemon zest + parsley + season to taste.

4. Serve with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil + plenty of grated parmigiano reggiano.

