



Photograph © Jean Cazals

SERVES (YIELD):	4
DIFFICULTY RATING:	●●●
PREPARATION TIME:	10 MINS
COOKING TIME:	10 MINS
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:	Blender

PLANNING AHEAD:
This can be made one day in advance, but it is always better when it is made just before serving

INGREDIENTS

50g/¼ onion, finely chopped
20g unsalted butter
200g/2 bunches watercress¹
(large bunches 400g each stalks removed)
50g /1 small handful spinach, washed and picked
375ml boiling water⁵
4g/4 pinches sea salt²
1 pinch freshly ground black pepper
375g ice³

Watercress Soup

Maman Blanc would only do soups with water, she never used stock and this recipe is no exception to her rule; there should be enough flavour in the main ingredients. In this soup, I use an interesting technique as I add ice to the watercress to halt the cooking process. In doing so I retain all the vivid colours of the watercress, all the textures, flavour and nutrients.

The pepperiness of watercress can vary, so taste it before cooking. If it is quite mild, leave some of the stalks attached to boost the flavour.

METHOD

- 1 On a low heat in a large sauce pan, sweeten the onion in the butter for about 3-5 minutes until softened and translucent⁴
- 2 Turn up the heat, add the watercress, spinach and wilt for two minutes
- 3 Add the boiling water, season with salt, pepper and quickly boil for two minutes⁵
- 4 Add the ice to stop the cooking and purée in a liquidiser until very smooth
- 5 Reheat, taste and correct the seasoning if required – serve immediately, piping hot to your guests in a large soup tureen.

CHEF'S NOTES*

- 1 Watercress - According to the variety, the watercress may vary in its strength of flavour. If your watercress is very peppery, cut off the entire stalk, but if it is mild, keep some of the stalk. Don't just use it as a garnish, use it in soups, salads, as part of vegetable dishes.
- 2 Salt - Always season at the start of cooking to allow the salt to permeate the ingredients. Adjust according to your ingredient, a strong cheese or good sm. salmon will add to the overall salt content of the dish. You can add but cannot take away. Types – 2 ways to harvest salt, one through evaporation of sea water & the other from the ground ie. Rock salt. Achieved by pumping water into the rock, extracting the brine solution & crystallising. Never use salt with horrible anti caking additives.
- 3 Ice - The ice stops the cooking, which will keep the vivid colour, the flavour and the nutrients. Reheat the soup at the last moment for the same reasons.
- 4 Sweetening - The sweetening process will convert the natural starches present in the onion into sugars enhancing the flavour of the soup.
- 5 Boiling water - The boiling water speeds up the cooking of the watercress and spinach, retaining the colour and flavour and more importantly most of the vitamins.

VARIATIONS

As a good Frenchman, I would be tempted to add a clove of pureed garlic or flakes of toasted garlic to the soup. A tablespoon of crème fraiche or Greek yoghurt would be a nice addition. A squeeze of lemon juice added at the last moment would heighten the flavour of the watercress, but add at the last minute or it will discolour the watercress.