

LOVE STARTS IN THE KITCHEN!™

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HEARTY LEEK AND POTATO CORN CHOWDER WITH WHITE CHEDDAR

Using mashed potato flakes instead of flour as a thickener adds protein and calcium without worrying about making a roux to thicken the soup. Now if you don't have leeks, go ahead and use onions. If you want to lower the fat, use a butter substitute and fat free half & half. And the bacon? Well, that's optional but oh so good! Yellow cheddar can be substituted, or try a Mexican blend for a new twist.

- 2-3 cups thinly sliced leeks, white and pale green part only – start with two and go from there
- Butter
- 6 cups diced Yukon Gold potatoes with some skin left on
- 2-3 cans, 14.5 oz each good quality chicken broth
- 1-1/2 cups half & half
- 10 oz frozen white shoe peg corn, thawed
- Up to 1 cup dry mashed potato flakes
- Salt and pepper to taste
- White Cheddar, shredded, Sauteed bacon, Green onions for garnish

Saute leeks in a bit of butter until fragrant. Add potatoes and stir to coat. Add broth and bring to a boil. Lower to medium heat and cook until potatoes are tender, about 15-20 minutes. Add half & half and continue to simmer until flavors blend. You can now puree some of the potatoes with a hand blender or mash with a potato masher, or leave as is. Pour in corn and cook another minute or two. Start adding potato flakes to thicken the mixture, and remember that as the soup sits, it gets thicker. Stir to blend and add seasonings to taste. Serve with choice of garnishes. Serves 6-8

Rita's Herb of the Week: LEEKS!

Leeks are a member of the onion family, quite mild in flavor and used in a lot of French dishes. Use only the white/pale green part as the green leaves are too tough, even when chopped finely. The leaves make a wonderful seasoning, though. And you can make a bouquet garni using the leek leaf as a pouch to hold aromatic herbs to season dishes. Tie the pouch up with kitchen twine and let it do its magic! Leeks are great for your cardiovascular system. Members of the onion family can raise beneficial HDL cholesterol, lower blood pressure, decrease the risk of cancer, reduce inflammation and even relieve congestion (remember the onion poultices Grandma used to use?!).

Leeks are grown in sandy soil so need to be washed real well before using. I like to rinse them lightly, then slice and then rinse well.

MORE RITA!

Check out my books *Gifts without Ribbons*, *Culinary Herbs that Heal Body and Soul*, *The Official Snack Guide for Beleaguered Sports parents and Sports Nutrition for Dummies* (I developed the recipes) and also my yummy bread blends.

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