

2 large or 3 medium leeks
 2 large or 3 medium russett potatoes
 2 Tablespoons butter
 1 cup half and half
 About 2 cups chicken broth (or more as needed to cover the potatoes)
 salt and freshly ground black pepper
 chopped chives

Vichyssoise

The culinary origins of vichyssoise, namely whether it is a genuinely French dish or an American innovation, is a subject of debate among culinary historians. Credit for the dish usually goes to Louis Diat, the chef at the Ritz-Carlton in New York City for most of the first half of the 20th century.

Whatever its origins, it is a delicious and refreshing start to a summer meal.



Clean and slice leeks (see facing page.)

Melt the butter in a four quart sauce pan and add the sliced leeks. Cook over medium low heat until soft but not brown (about 5 minutes.)

Peel the potatoes and cut into one half inch cubes or slices. Add the potatoes to the sauce pan with the softened leeks. Add enough chicken broth to cover the leeks and potatoes. Bring to a boil, reduce to simmer and cook until the potatoes are fork tender.

Allow leeks and potatoes to cool and then transfer to a blender or food processor. Puree the mixture until smooth (or leave some chunks if you want more of a "country" version.

Transfer to a bowl and add half and half (or a combination of half and half and chicken broth) until soup is desired thickness.

Chill and serve cold garnished with chopped chives.

You can substitute different vegetables for the potatoes to make different creamed soups. Substitute broccoli for the potatoes and you have cream of broccoli soup. Substitute asparagus and you have cream of asparagus soup. Cauliflower can be substituted to make cream of cauliflower soup.

Leeks

With a more delicate and sweeter flavor than onions, leeks add a subtle touch to recipes without overpowering the other flavors that are present. Although leeks are available throughout the year they are in season from the fall through the early part of spring when they are at their best.

Leeks are related to onions, shallots and scallions to which they bear a resemblance. They look like large scallions having a very small bulb and a long white cylindrical stalk of superimposed layers that flows into green, tightly wrapped, flat leaves.



Leeks purchased in the supermarket require cleaning and trimming.



Start by trimming the root end. Then begin trimming the stalks by running a sharp knife around the outer most stalk at the point where the stalk turns from light to dark green.



Continue trimming the stalks one layer at a time, preserving the light green tender part of the stalk and removing the dark green tough part.



Using a sharp knife, and starting an inch from the root end, split the leek open.



Rince the leek thoroughly. They are root vegetables and can have dirt and sand lodged in the stalks.



Shake dry and slice across the grain (as pictured) or lengthwise into julienne strips.