

ROASTED FENNEL VICHYSOISE

RICOTTA TOAST, PIMENT D'ESPELETTE, WATERCRESS

Chef Jeffery Scott prepared this recipe for Tablas Creek Vineyard. Serves 4.

PREP TIME
25 min

ROAST & SIMMER
35 min

CHILL TIME
3–4 hr

PORTIONS
4 bowls (6 oz ea.)

INGREDIENTS

For the Roasted Fennel:

Fresh fennel bulbs, trimmed, fronds reserved for garnish, cut into ½-in wedges 14 oz (1–2 bulbs)

Extra virgin olive oil, for roasting 1 tbsp

Fine sea salt & fresh white pepper Pinch

For the Soup:

Leeks, white & pale green parts only, washed & sliced 1 large (6 oz trimmed)

Unsalted butter 2 tbsp

Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled, sliced ¼ in thick 8 oz (1½ medium)

White chicken stock, or light vegetable stock 2 cups

Heavy whipping cream, 38% fat 7 tbsp

Whole milk ¼ cup

Pernod or pastis, anise liqueur 1½ tsp

Fresh lemon juice ½ tsp

Fine sea salt & ground white pepper To taste

For the Ricotta Toast:

Artisan country sourdough or levain, cut into 6 long crostini 4 slices (½ in thick)

Extra virgin olive oil, for brushing 1 tbsp

Whole milk ricotta, well drained ½ cup (2 tbsp per toast)

Finely grated lemon zest ⅓ tsp

Flaky sea salt, fleur de sel or Maldon Pinch

For the Garnish:

Piment d'Espelette, Basque AOP ¾ tsp total

Upland or wild watercress, tender sprigs ½ small bunch (¾ oz)

Tender fennel fronds, reserved from bulbs

Fruity extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling 2 tsp

METHOD

Roast the Fennel

- Preheat a convection oven to 400°F or a standard oven to 425°F.
- Toss the fennel wedges with olive oil, salt, and white pepper. Spread in a single layer on a parchment-lined sheet pan.
- Roast 20–25 min, until tender with light caramelization at the edges. Avoid heavy charring to keep the soup pale and silky.

Make & Purée the Soup

- **Sweat the Leeks:** In a 3-qt heavy-bottomed pot, melt the butter over medium-low heat. Add the leeks and a pinch of salt and sweat for 7–8 min, until completely tender and translucent with no browning.
- **Simmer:** Add the potatoes, roasted fennel, and stock. Bring to a gentle simmer, partially cover, and cook over medium-low for 15–18 min, until the potatoes crush easily with a spoon.
- **Blend:** Working in batches, blend the hot soup in a Vitamix on high for 90 sec until velvety and smooth. Pass through a fine chinois into a stainless bowl.
- **Finish & Chill:** Stir in the cold cream, milk, Pernod, lemon juice, salt, and white pepper. Set the bowl over an ice bath and stir until below 40°F. Cover and chill at least 3–4 hr; serving cold tightens the texture and brings out the anise. Thin with a splash of cold stock or milk if needed.

Ricotta Toast

- **Crostini:** Brush the bread with olive oil and toast at 400°F for 6–8 min, until golden and crisp at the edges but tender in the center.
- **Seasoned Ricotta:** Whisk the ricotta with the lemon zest, a pinch of salt, and a drop of olive oil until creamy. Spread 2 tbsp over each warm crostini.
- **Garnish:** Dust the ricotta with Piment d'Espelette and top with watercress leaves.

Plating & Service

- Ladle 5–6 oz of chilled vichyssoise into chilled, wide-rimmed shallow bowls.
- Drizzle the fruity olive oil in a delicate spiral over the surface.
- Scatter fennel fronds and small watercress sprigs over the center, then add a tiny pinch of Piment d'Espelette.
- Rest a ricotta toast across the rim of each bowl, or alongside, and serve immediately.