

Carrot Fennel Soup

INGREDIENTS:

1 bunch carrots, such as Chantenay, topped, scrubbed, and sliced ¼-inch
1 medium fennel bulb, thick stalks reserved, fronds saved for [oil](#) or [pesto](#) (See recipe on site), bulb and stalks sliced thinly
2 leeks, white and pale green only, sliced thinly, washed, and drained
1 small garlic clove, finely minced
Salt and white pepper to taste (you can use black pepper if you wish, but it will show as black specks in the soup, and the flavor of the white pepper does really well here)
1 tablespoon Herbes de Provence or 1 scant teaspoon Mexican cinnamon (your choice)
Neutral flavored oil as needed (If going with Herbes de Provence a light flavored olive oil works)
6 cups vegetable stock* or water, or as needed
½ cup [fennel pesto](#) or ¼ cup-or to taste- [fennel oil](#)
¼ cup crème fraîche or labne if you wish

METHOD:

Heat a 4 quart pot over medium heat. When hot, add oil to film well and heat oil. Add the leeks and stir into the oil. Cook, stirring frequently to prevent coloring, until leeks are “clear”.

Add the fennel and carrots and toss to coat evenly with oil and distribute the leeks. If needed, add a little more oil. Lower heat to medium low, and when pan is cooler, put a lid on and cook until the vegetables are tender and just beginning to color. Stir occasionally to ensure the vegetables do not scorch, or even brown. A little golden color on the carrots is okay, but avoid browning anything.

Once vegetables are tender and their flavors are more pronounced, around 15-25 minutes, make a well in the center of the vegetables and wait for oil to accumulate there. If none shows up, add a small amount and heat it up. Add the garlic and the cinnamon or Herbes de Provence. Carefully cook so the garlic doesn’t color at all. When softened, season with salt and pepper and add 4 cups of stock or water. Bring to a simmer.

Pureé the soup at this point, adding stock as needed to take the soup to the desired texture. The soup should have a creamy texture, and should coat a spoon bottom lightly. (Remember to start on low with a 2/3rds full blender with hot liquid to prevent it from blowing out under the lid and

hurting you.) If the soup is too thick, add liquid and heat through. Taste for seasoning and adjust as needed.

When ready to serve, put soup in warmed bowls, and drizzle with fennel oil or place a dollop of fennel pesto in the center. Add a bit of crème fraiche or labne if you wish, and serve hot.

Chef's Notes: *Use a lightly flavored vegetable stock, and avoid those with tomato (affects color and flavor too much) and those that are sweet. Many vegetable stocks are pretty sweet from too much cooked onion and carrot. Different seasonings work really well here. Try a sweet curry powder, or cumin, coriander, oregano and a pinch of chili powder. Fennel seed and oregano or basil would be good also. If you find the candied fennel seeds that are part of the Indian after-dinner “mint” mix known as “mukhwas”, you can use some of these as a garnish. I have long thought these the inspiration for Good’n’Plenty candies.