



Carrboro & Southern Village

FARMERS' MARKET

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Recipe of the Week featuring **Spinach**

April 9, 2005

Creamy Spinach and Smoked Cheese Gratin

From Sheri Castle of Creative Cooking with Sheri Castle

This rich and luscious gratin is a sophisticated version of creamed spinach. It could be a side dish or the centerpiece of a vegetable plate. Although spinach is standard, you could use any leafy green that has been wilted or cooked to the point of tenderness.

The smoky cheese adds an unexpected flavor twist. The smoked farmers' cheese from Chapel Hill Dairy would be fabulous; although you could also use smoked Gouda or smoked cheddar.

Don't let the word *bèchamel* scare you! It's a quick and easy sauce made by stirring milk into a cooked mixture of flour and butter. If you use instant sauce flour (such as Pillsbury's Shake and Blend—available at any regular grocery store) and a whisk, I promise that it won't lump. Please use whole milk; *bèchamel* made with skimmed milk is runny and meager.

Gratin

- 1 1/2 pounds baby spinach or other leafy green
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 recipe Smoked Cheese Bèchamel (recipe below)
- 1/4 cup fine dry bread crumbs (such as unseasoned Progresso crumbs)
- 2 tablespoons coarsely shredded Chapel Hill Creamery Smoked Farmer's Cheese

1. Wilt the greens in a large pot of boiling, salted water until completely tender, about 3 minutes for spinach. Drain in a colander and press out as much water as possible.
2. Preheat the broiler and arrange an oven rack about 10 inches below the heat.
3. Heat the olive oil in a medium, ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat.
4. Add the onion and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.
5. Stir in the wilted spinach.
6. Stir in the Smoked Cheese Bèchamel. Reduce the heat to medium and cook until bubbling, about 1 minute.
7. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
8. Sprinkle the top with the breadcrumbs and cheese.
9. Place the skillet in the oven and broil until the top of the gratin is golden and bubbling, about 2 minutes. Serve hot.

Makes 6 servings

Smoked Cheese Bèchamel

2 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons instant or all-purpose flour
1 3/4 cups whole milk
4 ounces coarsely shredded Chapel Hill Creamery Smoked Farmer's Cheese
1/2 teaspoon smoked or sweet paprika
Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat.
2. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking constantly, for one minute.
3. Add the milk and bring to a boil, whisking constantly.
4. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, whisking constantly, until the sauce thickens, about 5 minutes.
5. Add the cheese, paprika and nutmeg and stir just until the cheese melts, about 2 minutes.
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
7. Use at once or transfer to a bowl and press plastic wrap directly down on the top (to prevent a skin forming) and refrigerate.

A word about this 2005 growing season...

Well, it's been a little rainy. We've had some warm days and this past week some almost hot days, but overall the season has started slowly.

"It was too cloudy and too wet for March," says Joan Jordan of Sun Meadow Greenhouse. "Everything is fine but the damp weather delays things a bit. Even in the greenhouse cloudy days slow things down. You need the sun to help things grow."

Even though things are off to a slow start, you can find a good variety of produce at the Market now. Like...

Arugula, bok choy, cow's milk cheeses, herbs, red and green kale, goat's milk cheeses, greenhouse items like tomatoes, strawberries, zucchini, squash, and basil; green onions, lettuces – baby lettuce mix, Boston bibb, hydroponic bibb, red leaf, and oak leaf; locally raised meats including grass-fed beef, lamb, free-range chickens, and pork; peas, pea shoots, pecans, radishes, shitake mushrooms, spinach, turnips, watercress, baked goods, bedding plants, crafts, fresh-cut flowers, honey, jams and jellies.