



In the Kitchen

with Barb Agee April 2015

Celebrating Celery

Celery is one of the popular Mediterranean herbs recognized for its strong aromatic flavor that it imparts to a variety of cuisines. One cup celery weighs in at only 16 calories and is loaded with vitamins and minerals. Make celery the star ingredient of your next menu.

Chunky Celery Soup

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| 1 large onion | 2 large cloves garlic, chopped |
| 1 large russet potato, peeled | 6 cups vegetable or chicken broth** |
| 3 – 4 medium carrots, peeled | 2 cups cooked wild rice, brown rice, barley or wheat berries |
| 10 medium stalks of celery, washed & trimmed | 1 cup heavy whipping cream |
| 3 tablespoons olive oil | Celery Pesto (see recipe below) |
| Salt | |

Chop onion, potato, carrots, and celery into pieces that are about one-half inch or smaller, all vegetables somewhat uniform in size. In a large soup pot over medium high heat combine the olive oil, onion, potato, carrots, celery and few pinches of salt. Sauté 5 to 6 minutes until celery has slightly softened. Stir in the garlic and add the stock. Bring to a simmer and let cook another 10 minutes or until vegetables are just cooked through. Remove from heat; stir in rice and cream. Return to heat and simmer for 5 minutes until soup is warm. Ladle into bowls and top with a small spoonful of Celery Pesto (see recipe below).

** May substitute 2 cups of celery broth (see recipe below)

Celery Broth

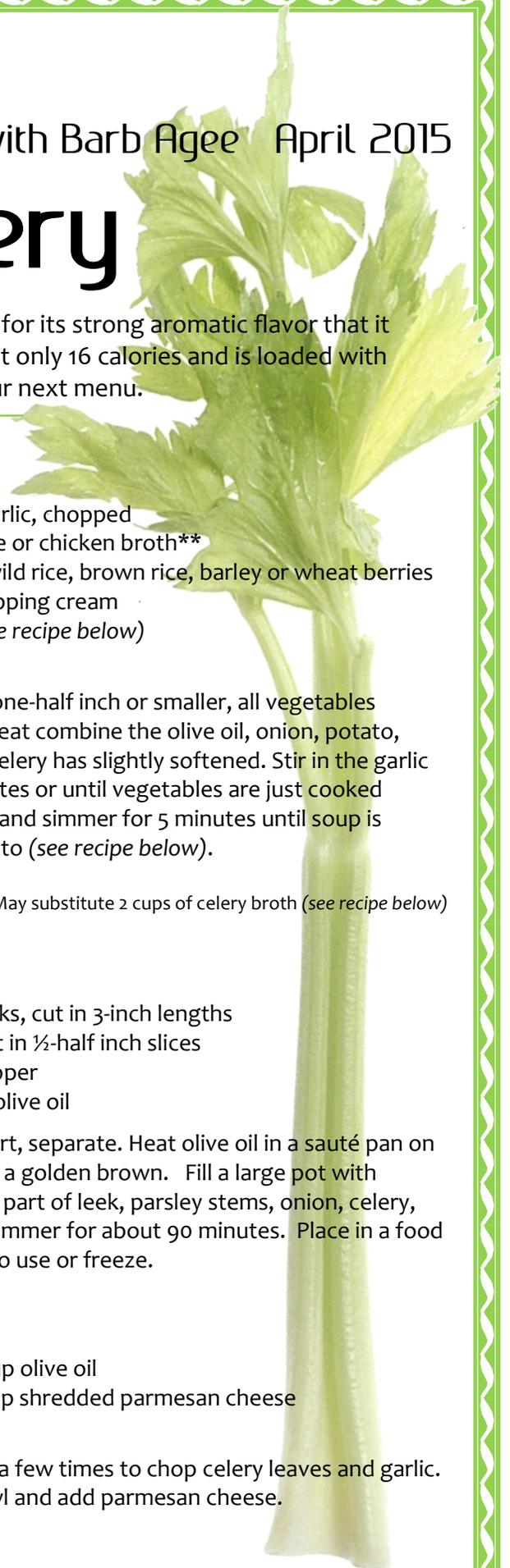
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| 2 sprigs lemon thyme | 6 celery stalks, cut in 3-inch lengths |
| 1 small leek | 1 daikon, cut in ½-half inch slices |
| A few parsley stems | Salt and pepper |
| 1 large yellow onion, peeled and quartered | 1 teaspoon olive oil |

Cut the green part off of the leek and finely slice the white part, separate. Heat olive oil in a sauté pan on medium-high heat; add the white part of the leek. Sauté until a golden brown. Fill a large pot with 3 quarts of water. Add thyme, green part of leek, fried white part of leek, parsley stems, onion, celery, radish, salt and pepper. Cover with a lid; bring to a boil and simmer for about 90 minutes. Place in a food processor and liquefy. Pour through a fine sieve. It is ready to use or freeze.

Celery Pesto

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| 1 cup of celery leaves | ½ cup olive oil |
| 1 large clove garlic | ½ cup shredded parmesan cheese |
| ¼ teaspoon salt | |

Place celery leaves, garlic and salt in a food processor. Pulse a few times to chop celery leaves and garlic. Drizzle in olive oil and pulse a few more times. Place in a bowl and add parmesan cheese.



Braised Celery with Crunchy Bread Topping

1 head celery
2 carrots, peeled
1 small yellow onion, peeled and divided
3 tablespoons butter, divided
1 cup chicken stock
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
1½ teaspoons fresh thyme, finely chopped or ½ teaspoon dried thyme

¼ cup dry white wine
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ cup bread crumbs from day old rustic white bread
¼ cup freshly grated Gruyere
¼ cup Parmesan, shredded
½ cup toasted almonds, chopped

Heat oven to 400°F. Remove sturdy outer celery stalks, about 8. Set the inner stalks aside for the aromatics. Rinse celery and remove any coarse celery strings. Slice celery diagonally into ½-inch chunks. Cut carrots into 3-inch lengths, then into thin sticks. Cut onion into half from root to top. Cut one onion half into slivers.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in a sauté pan, add celery chunks, carrots and onion slivers; sauté for 2 minutes. Add chicken stock; cover and simmer on low for 10 to 12 minutes until celery is fork tender.

Topping: finely chop the other half of onion and 4 celery heart stalks with leaves. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a medium-size skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, thyme. Sauté, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are soft and begin to brown, about 10 minutes. Pour in the wine and simmer until the pan is almost dry. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil; stir and then add bread crumbs and almonds. Remove from heat and stir in cheeses.

Remove braised vegetables from pan and place in a swallow oven proof baking dish. Sprinkle topping over vegetables. Place vegetables in oven until cheese is melted and the top is crusty. Serves 8

Celery Risotto with Pistachio Pesto

1½ cups celery, diced and divided
4 cups vegetable, chicken or celery broth **, warmed
Olive oil
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 sprig lemon thyme
1 Meyer lemon, zest and juice

1 cup orzo
1 cup Arborio rice
½ cup parmesan cheese, grated
Salt and pepper
4 tablespoons chopped parsley, divided
Pistachio Pesto (see recipe below)



In a deep saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil and sauté minced garlic, lemon thyme, lemon zest, shallots and 1 cup diced celery. Stir until translucent. Transfer celery mixture to a plate; set aside. Add a little more olive oil to saucepan and add the pasta and rice. Sauté pasta and rice until both are coated with the olive oil. Add 1½ cups warm broth. Stir constantly.

Bring liquid to a boil then lower heat to medium-low and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add the Pistachio Pesto (see recipe below) and 2 tablespoons of parsley. Periodically check the liquid, adding ¼ to ½ cup warm broth when all liquid is absorbed. Let simmer another 10 minutes or until rice is almost cooked. Add the ¼ cup parmesan cheese, shallot and celery mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle with the Meyer Lemon juice. Discard thyme sprig.

Place in a warm serving dish. Sprinkle with remaining parmesan cheese, parsley and chopped celery. Serve remaining Pistachio Pesto in a small dish with risotto.

Pistachio Pesto

½ cup salted pistachio nuts
½ cup chopped parsley

¼ cup almond oil or olive oil

Blend pistachio nuts and parsley in a food processor. Drizzle oil over mixture and pulse 3 to 4 more times to blend. Salt to taste.