

CREAMY MUSHROOM, HAZELNUT AND THYME SOUP

2lb/900g selection of mushrooms (mixture of button, chestnut and wild)

1 leek, thinly sliced

2 sticks celery

1 large onion, roughly chopped

2-3 sprigs of thyme

2 cloves of garlic

2oz/50g butter

2oz/50g plain flour

2 pints/1½ litres chicken or vegetable stock

10fl oz/300ml pouring cream

2 tsps truffle oil (optional), very intense flavour

4oz/100g hazelnuts, roughly chopped



1. Pre-heat the oven to 160°C/300°F/gas mark 2. Slice and prepare all the mushrooms and place them on a roasting tray
2. with the garlic and thyme. Roast in the oven for 15-20 minutes or until just becoming tender but shrivelled up a little. This helps to develop and intensify the flavours. Retain a small amount of these roasted mushrooms to garnish the soup just prior to serving.
3. Roughly chop the remaining vegetables (onions, leeks and celery) and sauté gently in a large saucepan with the butter for four to five minutes, and then add the roasted mushrooms. After two to three minutes you can stir in the flour and use it to coat all of the vegetables and also to dry up any liquids in the pan -- this will act as a thickening agent.
4. Carefully pour in the boiling stock and bring the entire mixture to the boil, then reduce to a low simmer until all of the vegetables are tender. Season as appropriate, add the cream and truffle oil, and then blitz with a hand blender or food processor. Serve immediately or leave to reheat later.

To garnish, crush some hazelnuts and sprinkle them over the soup.