

ASPARAGUS SOUP

1 very large bunch asparagus (1kg/2lbs4ozs)
3 tablespoons rapeseed seed oil
1 large onion finely chopped or grated
freshly ground salt and pepper
24ozs/750ml chicken or vegetable stock
dash of cream if desired

6 tablespoons flour
4 tablespoons rapeseed oil
1 cups cold milk
1 cup asparagus stock (more if required later)
good pinch of nutmeg

METHOD

1. Prepare the asparagus by removing any hard woody pieces. The point at which the asparagus snaps easily, from the tip downwards, is edible and the woody part which is usually discarded is kept for making a delicious asparagus stock for the soup.
2. Chop the remaining asparagus spears into pieces - on a diagonal if preferred. Cover with water and bring to the boil.
3. Drain off the asparagus and pour the liquid in which the asparagus have cooked over the woody ends and continue to cook these to extract maximum asparagus flavour.
4. Bring these to the boil and then simmer until reduced to about half. Strain and cool.
5. Meanwhile gently fry the onion in the 3 tablespoons of oil until lightly browned. Set aside.
6. In a saucepan **off the heat**, mix together the flour and the 4 tablespoons of rapeseed oil and slowly add the cold milk, whisking all the time to ensure that the mixture is lump free. Beat in the asparagus cooking liquid.
7. Then place the saucepan on the cooker and cook until the mixture is thickened.
8. Add the fried onion and the par cooked asparagus pieces to the mixture as well as the chicken or vegetable stock and continue to cook until the asparagus is tender.
9. Season to taste with salt, pepper and nutmeg.
10. This soup is delicious hot or cold. A dash of cream added to it before serving is very good.