

Nigel Slater's gnocchi with spinach and dolcelatte recipe

A truly rich and creamy pasta dish for a cold wet winter's night



Say cheese: a wonderful dish of midweek comfort. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin for the Observer Jonathan Lovekin/Observer

Nigel Slater

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The recipe

Put a large pan of water on to boil. When the water is boiling, salt it lightly and add 500g of gnocchi. Cook for 3 or 4 minutes, until they rise to the surface, then drain.

Tip the gnocchi into a lightly buttered baking dish and set the oven at 180C/gas mark 4. Wash 150g of spinach and, while it is still wet, put it into a deep pan, place over a moderate heat and cover tightly with a lid. Let the spinach cook in its own steam for a couple of minutes, then remove from the pan, drain and squeeze almost dry.

Tear the spinach into manageable pieces then tuck it among the gnocchi. Break 200g of dolcelatte or gorgonzola into large pieces and add to the dish. Season 300ml of double cream with a little black pepper then pour over the gnocchi. Bake for 30 minutes until bubbling. Enough for 4.

The trick

Take care not to over-salt the gnocchi's cooking water. The cheese will provide enough salt. Balance the richness of this dish by serving it with a crisp salad of bitter leaves, such as chicory, frisée and watercress with thick crunchy stems, to mop up the creamy, cheese-flavoured sauce.

The twist

Use steamed purple sprouting broccoli or lightly cooked Brussels sprouts in place of the spinach. Cover the surface with grated parmesan and a handful of fine fresh breadcrumbs for a golden crust. Use penne or other pasta instead of gnocchi.

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