

Spring Pea Soup with Mint and Toasted Pistachios

You can shell the peas while you chat with your dinner partner, or use frozen petite peas; they'll work just as well. The addition of pistachios isn't necessary, but helps to impart a nice nutty finish to a very fresh tasting soup.

¼ cup raw shelled pistachios
2 tablespoon unsalted butter
2 medium leeks, white part only, coarsely chopped, rinsed well
¼ cup fresh mint, coarsely chopped
3 cups chicken stock
1½ cup fresh or frozen green peas (thawed)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons crème fraîche

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Place the pistachios in a pie tin and toast in the oven for 6 to 8 minutes, or until golden brown. When golden, set aside.

2. Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the leeks to the pan and cook until the leeks are soft, 7 to 10 minutes.

3. Add the chicken stock and peas. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, for 8 minutes.

4. Remove the soup from the stove. Stir in the mint. Use a hand-held blender to puree the soup in the pan, or puree in batches in a countertop blender and return to rinsed pan. Warm over low heat. (If preparing soup earlier in the day, refrigerate and warm over low heat 30 minutes before serving.) Season with salt and pepper.

5. Ladle the warm soup into bowls. Add 1 tablespoons of crème fraîche to each bowl and sprinkle each bowl generously with the toasted pistachios, then serve immediately.