

THOUGHTS FROM THE KITCHEN

Zingy spring soup

For many years I would boost the flavour of many a dish by adding a wide range of herbs, spices and other ingredients. But recently, during a lengthy episode of ill health, and a very restrictive exclusion diet, I've needed

to identify and limit myself to the basic essentials.

Andy Yeomans suggests that less is more, not just in the kitchen but also in life generally...

Interestingly, very often little is lost by doing this, and in fact the key tastes and overall impact of a dish typically come over more strongly and

persuasively. I was prompted to reflect on some of the parallels between a back-to-basics approach to producing daily meals and life in general. For example:

Food, as with life, can get so involved and multi-faceted that the essential and most important aspects of a dish, or a particular aspect of life, are lost to view, or at least become harder to identify. In both cases it's often useful to try to eliminate all those unnecessary elements, or at least relegate them to a lower point on a scale of what is truly valuable and relevant, and by doing so to see more clearly what is of real worth and importance.

As with life in general, cooking can grow out of proportion, with the prospect of failure, when entertaining for example. But, truly, most of us appreciate and are very satisfied with a simple, hearty meal – and most of us yearn for greater simplicity in our day-to-day living and in our interactions and dealings with those around us. It's good to know just where we stand and to be able to identify what's essentially good and positive and what, beyond this, might be improved on in the future.

Retreating from the complex to the simple often involves a salutary exercise in humility. Haven't we sometimes been kind of proud to have produced a culinary tour de force, or, more generally, smugly thought how good we were at handling complex issues in our work and private lives, and still coming out 'on top', with people's expectations of us raised further. But do we stop to ask whether these are our real values, our true priorities for a contented, fulfilled existence, or indeed the essential basis for sincere relationships with others?

As spring ushers in a period of abundance of fresh leafy vegetables, why not boost your vitality with this delicious and quickly made zingy spring soup. 🍃



Ingredients

- ▶ 1 packet of watercress and an equal amount of other leaves such as spinach, rocket, young nettles and wild garlic from the garden (about 160g in total)
- ▶ 5 spring onions, finely sliced
- ▶ 1 litre chicken stock
- ▶ 1 tbsp light soy sauce or Thai fish sauce
- ▶ 1 heaped tbsp fresh grated ginger
- ▶ 1/2 small green chilli, finely sliced
- ▶ Fresh coriander for garnish

Method

Whilst simmering the stock with ginger and chilli for 10 minutes, remove long stalks from the leaves, coarsely chop and add to the stock along with the spring onions. Return to simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the soy/fish sauce before serving and garnish generously with finely chopped coriander leaves.