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Leeks braised with leek sauce.

(Or "Leeks²" for the mathematicians among you.)

I invented this one for my brother, who is an incorrigible leekophile. The leeks in the Market Garden last week were HUGE and, while the dark green tops are a bit too tough and stalky to eat, they are very tasty and make a great sauce.

Ingredients for 4 people:

3 very large leeks.

2 cloves of garlic.

1 small onion, finely chopped.

About 400 ml water

1 teaspoon vegetable stock (you don't need much as you want the taste of the leeks, not the stock, to dominate)

salt and pepper to taste.

What to do. Roughly speaking:

Trim the top and bottom off the leeks. Wash very thoroughly – make sure that you get all the grit out from between the stalks.

Slice the pale, tender part of each leek (probably just over half the total length) into discs about 2 cm thick, and lay them out on the bottom of an ovenproof dish (I used a lasagne dish).

Chop the green stalky parts of the leeks along with the garlic and onion very finely. Heat some oil in a saucepan and fry the leeks, garlic and onion for about 5 minutes.

Add the water and teaspoon of vegetable stock. Bring it to the boil and simmer gently for 20 minutes, until the dark green part of the leeks are soft and tender.

Liquidise the sauce with a hand blender or in a liquidiser. (If you don't have a blender you can force the sauce through a sieve with a wooden spoon). It should be thick and creamy looking. If it's too thick just add a little more water.

Pour the sauce over the leeks in the ovenproof dish, cover with foil and place in the oven at 200C/400F/Gas mark 7 for 20 minutes. Take off the foil for the last 5 minutes to brown the top slightly. Serve with almost anything; sausages and mash, smoked salmon, seared salmon steaks, Sunday roast.....

About Kay's Essex Road Recipes.

I improvise recipes based on what looks good in my local shops. Living just around the corner from 4 of London's best food shops; **Steve Hatt** the fishmonger, **The Market Garden** greengrocers, **James Elliott** the butcher and **Raab's** Bakery, it's easy to be inspired. Throughout 2014 I plan to share a recipe a week. Once you get the hang of it, you can start to improvise your own menus.

These recipe cards are old school and limited edition; only available on paper in the shops, and in our splendid local pub, **The New Rose**. At the end of the year, though, you'll be able to order a special edition full set of about 50 recipes online via frogandbison.com – check in there later in the year for more information.

All recipes are for about 4 people. They're not written for complete beginners; I'm assuming that you know a little bit about cooking so I've been approximate and poetic with measurements, times, weights and instructions. I hope you get the idea, and go on to improvise your own Essex Road recipes.

Most of the other ingredients, including spices and oils, are available from the convenience stores between the New Rose and Raab's. Pasta, risotto rice and really good oils and wines are to be found in **Saponara** on Prebend Street which also serves the best fresh pasta and pizza in the neighbourhood.

If you have any suggestions or comments I'd love to hear them. You can leave them on the facebook page (Kay's Essex Road Recipes) or, in the spirit of the thing, write me a note and leave it in one of the shops. Kay