Chilled Minted English Pea Soup

Serves 4

Here is a lovely spring dish that is a bit of a blast from the past. In our other life as winemakers, I made this recipe for an S. Anderson newsletter. That makes this one at least 20 years old. It has remained a favorite all this time. As soon as fresh peas are available I welcome the season with this soup. I have lightened it a touch by substituting half and half for the heavy cream called for in the original recipe, but it hasn't made it any less delicious.

1 small onion, diced (about 1 cup, 4 1/2 ozs. or 125g)
2 Tblsp. butter
1 1/2 cups shelled English peas
1 1/2 cups chicken stock (preferably bone broth)
1 cup half and half (or go for broke and use heavy cream)
1 Tblsp. finely chopped fresh mint leaves
salt and white pepper to taste

In a medium saucepan, saute the onion in the butter until soft and translucent. Add the peas and the chicken stock. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to a simmer and cook until peas are tender - about 5 minutes. Add the half and half and mint. Place this mixture in a blender and puree until smooth. Pour through a strainer, pressing any solids that might remain to get every ounce of flavor out of it. Season with salt and white pepper. Put in a glass container and chill at least 4 hours or overnight. If you have lived large and used cream, it might need a little thinning with some milk to the desired consistency.

Garnish with a fresh mint leaf, and/or a dollop of sour cream (it tends to sink, but adds some nice flavor). In our champagne making days I would also put a little spoonful of black caviar on top. If you're feeling very fancy, you can do that too.

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