

Zuppa di castagne

Chestnut soup

Serves 6

12 tablespoons (6 ounces) butter	1/2 cup cognac
2/3 cup chopped shallots	5 cups vegetable stock
2/3 cup chopped peeled celery root	1 bay leaf, fresh
1/2 pound button mushrooms, trimmed and sliced	1 sprig sage
1 1/2 pounds vacuum-packed chestnuts, coarsely chopped	1 sprig thyme
Kosher salt and finely ground white pepper	3/4 cup light cream or half and half

In a large saucepan, melt six tablespoons of the butter over medium heat. Add the shallots and celery root and cook for ten minutes or until the celery root is tender. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside. Melt the remaining six tablespoons butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the mushrooms and chestnuts and sauté until golden brown, about five minutes. Transfer to the saucepan with the celery root. Return the saucepan to medium heat and stir until the celery root is hot; season to taste with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat and add the cognac. Carefully flame the cognac by holding a match just above the surface of the liquid. Flambéing the cognac will evaporate the alcohol; when the flame dies down, return the saucepan to medium heat and add the vegetable stock. Tie the bay leaf, sage, and thyme together with kitchen twine and add to the pan. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for thirty minutes, stirring occasionally. Discard the herb bundle. Working in small batches, transfer the soup to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the soup to the saucepan, stir in the cream, and gently heat through; do not boil. Season with salt and pepper, and serve.

Recipe by Chef Fabio Trabocchi, adapted from *Cucina of Le Marche: A Chef's Treasury of Recipes from Italy's Last Culinary Frontier* (2006)
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Antico, *Atropos* (detail), probably after 1519, bronze with silvering, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Kunstammer