

## Spinach & Bacon Soufflé

*Although spinach is sold in markets year-round, its prime season is early spring.*

In a fry pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the bacon and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly golden and crisp and all the fat is rendered, 6 to 8 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels to drain.

Meanwhile, preheat an oven to 450°F. Butter a 2-quart soufflé dish and dust with half of the Parmigiano-Reggiano. Measure out a sheet of aluminum foil long enough to encircle the soufflé dish with an extra 2 inches left over and fold it in half lengthwise. Butter one side of the foil. Wrap it, butter side in, around the soufflé dish, positioning it so that it stands 2 inches above the rim of the dish. Secure in place with kitchen string.

In a saucepan over medium-low heat, melt the 2 Tbs. butter. Add the onion and sauté, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 10 minutes. Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes, allowing the mixture to bubble. Meanwhile, in a saucepan over medium heat, bring the milk to just below a boil. Remove the onion mixture from the heat and gradually whisk in the hot milk. Return to medium-low heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until thick and smooth, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in the bacon. Add the egg yolks one at a time, stirring well after each addition. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

In a bowl, using a balloon whisk, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold half of the whites into the yolk mixture to lighten it. Top with the Gruyère, the remaining whites and the spinach and fold in just until no white drifts remain. Do not overmix. Pour into the prepared soufflé dish. Sprinkle the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano evenly over the top.

Bake until the top of the soufflé is golden and the center no longer quivers when the dish is shaken, 35 to 45 minutes. Remove the foil and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Seasonal Celebration Series, *Spring*, by Joanne Weir (Time-Life Books, 1997).

### Ingredients for Spinach & Bacon Soufflé

1 tsp. olive oil

3 bacon slices, cut into ½-inch squares

Unsalted butter for buttering dish, plus 2 Tbs.

⅓ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

1 yellow onion, diced

6 Tbs. all-purpose flour

2 cups milk

5 egg yolks

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

6 egg whites, at room temperature

1½ cups lightly packed shredded Gruyère cheese

2 cups lightly packed baby spinach leaves or tender larger leaves, torn into pieces, carefully rinsed and dried

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### Tips for Successful Soufflés

- Serve a soufflé immediately after baking; it is a towering puff that will begin to collapse in a few minutes.

- A good French porcelain soufflé dish is essential. It provides even heating and does not stain. The dish's classic design of pleats is said to mimic the pleats on a chef's hat (toque).

- Butter the soufflé dish and then coat with sugar for a dessert soufflé, or with bread crumbs or cheese for a savory soufflé. This also helps the soufflé to rise.

- A collar is useful when making a soufflé. This is a piece of parchment or foil that is wrapped around the top of the soufflé dish and is about 2 inches higher than the rim. The collar helps to guide the shape of extremely delicate soufflés as well as soufflé mixtures that are filled to the top of the dish. Collars are always used for frozen soufflés.

- Sugar is added to the beaten egg whites for dessert soufflés. Some recipes call for adding a pinch of cream of tartar to help stabilize the egg whites.

- Do not overbeat the egg whites, as this will result in a soufflé with an unpleasant texture. The beaten whites should form stiff peaks and have a glossy, wet appearance; if they are dry, they have been overbeaten.

- Do not allow the beaten egg whites to rest at all. As soon as you have beaten them, quickly incorporate them into the soufflé base, first by adding a little to loosen it and then folding in the rest. Then bake the soufflé immediately.

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## Technique Class: Simply Soufflé

The word soufflé in French means “blown up.” A soufflé acquires its taste (flavor) from the base and its feel (texture) from the beaten egg whites. During baking, the air beaten into the egg whites expands and the water present in the base turns to steam, causing the soufflé to rise.

Savory soufflés have a base (flavor component) of:

- Meat, fish or vegetable purees.

- Flavored béchamel sauce (milk-based white sauce) or velouté sauce (egg yolk-enriched white sauce).

Dessert soufflés have a base (flavor component) of:

- Pastry cream.

- Bouille or stirred pudding (a boiled mixture of sugar, flour, milk and egg yolks).

- Fruit purees with sugar.

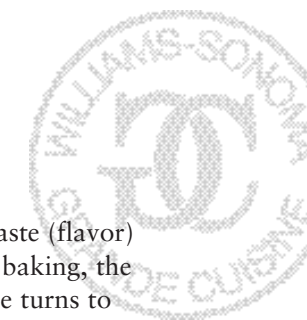
- Chocolate soufflés are unique as they do not require a starch but can simply be made by combining whipped egg whites with a ganache.

### Essential Soufflé Tools

- **Soufflé Dishes and Ramekins:** Designed with tall sides so that airy soufflés can rise straight and high, these baking dishes are commonly circular and range from single-serving to larger sizes. Most professionals prefer high-quality French porcelain soufflé dishes because of their durability, even heating and classic presentation.

- **Balloon Whisk or Whisk Attachment:** Whether you are whisking the egg whites by hand or with an electric mixer, a balloon whisk or whisk attachment will produce beautiful whipped egg whites. The exaggerated shape of the balloon whisk provides the most aeration, which gives the egg whites their texture.

- **Spatula:** To correctly fold the flavor components into the egg whites, it is important to use a flat spatula that allows you to fold gently so the beaten egg whites are deflated as little as possible.



Ingredients for Leek & Gruyère Soufflé
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2 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened, plus 5 Tbs. cold unsalted butter

Ingredients for Chocolate Soufflé Cakes
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Unsalted butter for buttering ramekins

\* Available at Williams-Sonoma stores.

## Leek & Gruyère Soufflé

Position a rack in the upper third of an oven and preheat to 400°F. Coat a 14-inch oval gratin dish or large soufflé dish with the 2 Tbs. butter and sprinkle the bottom and sides with ½ cup of the cheese.

In a large fry pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the leeks and thyme and cook until the leeks are tender, about 12 minutes. Season with salt and let cool.

In a heavy saucepan over medium heat, melt the 5 Tbs. butter. Add the flour and whisk for 1 minute until combined. Whisk in the half-and-half and cook, whisking, until the sauce is smooth and thick, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a bowl. Stir in the egg yolks, one at a time. Stir in the remaining 1½ cups cheese and the leeks. Season with salt and pepper.

In a large bowl, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold one-fourth of the whites into the leek mixture. Quickly fold in the remaining whites until no white streaks remain. Pour into the prepared dish. Bake until the soufflé is golden brown, about 25 minutes. Serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Cooking from the Farmers’ Market*, by Tasha DeSerio & Jodi Liano (Weldon Owen, 2010).

## Chocolate Soufflé Cakes

*Using our molten chocolate cake kit, it’s easy to prepare individual soufflés that puff up beautifully and make an impressive presentation. A drizzle of velvety caramel sauce adds a decadent finish.*

Preheat an oven to 375°F. Butter and sugar ten 4.7-fl.-oz. ramekins and place on a rimmed baking sheet.

Prepare the molten chocolate cake batter according to the package instructions. Let stand at room temperature for about 15 minutes to allow the batter to firm up.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites and salt on medium-high speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase the speed to high, gradually add the ⅓ cup sugar 1 Tbs. at a time, and beat until stiff, glossy peaks form, about 3 minutes more.

Using a rubber spatula, fold half of the egg whites into the chocolate mixture until combined. Then gently fold in the remaining whites just until no white streaks remain; do not overmix.

Divide the batter evenly among the prepared ramekins and smooth the tops. Bake until the soufflés are puffed but still jiggle slightly in the center when the ramekins are gently shaken, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer the ramekins to individual dessert plates and pour warmed caramel sauce over the soufflés. Serve immediately. Serves 10.

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## Cold Lemon Soufflé

*This unbaked soufflé achieves its lofty height with the aid of a paper collar. To make a collar, cut a strip of parchment or waxed paper about 2 inches longer than the circumference of the soufflé dish. Fold the strip in half lengthwise and seal the open edge by folding it over, forming a 1-inch flap. Tape or tie the paper around the soufflé dish so that it rises 2 inches above the rim. The collar lets you fill the dish above the rim, allowing this frozen dessert to mimic the puff of a traditional oven-risen soufflé.*

Fit a 4-cup soufflé dish with a collar (see note above).

In a stainless-steel or glass bowl, using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the egg yolks, sugar and lemon zest until thick, about 2 minutes. In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the lemon juice to a simmer. Slowly add to the egg yolk mixture while stirring constantly. Beat the mixture on medium speed until it falls in a thick ribbon when the beaters are lifted, about 10 minutes.

In another small saucepan, sprinkle the gelatin over the water and let soften for about 5 minutes. Heat over low heat until the gelatin dissolves; do not allow it to boil. Stir into the egg yolk mixture.

Using a balloon whisk or an electric mixer on medium-high speed, lightly whip 1 cup of the cream in a chilled bowl until soft peaks form. Set aside. In a separate large, spotlessly clean bowl, using a clean balloon whisk or mixer on medium-high speed, beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Set aside.

Nest the bowl holding the egg yolk mixture in a larger bowl partially filled with ice cubes and water and stir gently until the mixture begins to thicken, 6 to 8 minutes. Carefully fold in the whipped cream and beaten egg whites. Pour into the prepared soufflé dish. The mixture should come to the top of the collar. Refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours.

When ready to serve, using a balloon whisk or an electric mixer on medium-high speed, beat the remaining ½ cup cream in a chilled bowl until stiff peaks form. Carefully remove the collar from the soufflé and spread half of the whipped cream over the top. Spoon the remaining cream into a pastry bag fitted with a small star tip and pipe rosettes of cream around the edge. Gently press the pistachios into the sides of the soufflé and serve. Serves 4 to 6.

**Note:** This dish includes uncooked eggs. They run a risk of being infected with salmonella or other bacteria, which can lead to food poisoning. This risk is of most concern to small children, older people, pregnant women and anyone with a compromised immune system. If you have health and safety concerns, do not consume undercooked eggs.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *French*, by Diane Rossen Worthington (Simon & Schuster, 2003).

#### Ingredients for Cold Lemon Soufflé

4 eggs, separated

1 cup sugar

3 Tbs. finely grated lemon zest

½ cup fresh lemon juice

1½ Tbs. unflavored gelatin

¼ cup water

1½ cups heavy cream

½ cup finely chopped pistachios or almonds