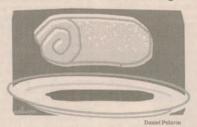
THE CHEF

Diane Forley



HIS is a dish from my childhood, one of those home-entertaining concoctions from the 1960's, but I tweaked it. When my mother used to serve a rolled soufflé — a rectangle of airy, baked egg that is formed into the shape of a jellyroll — it was filled with chopped spinach and ricotta cheese.

I wanted to recreate it in a more refined way, with the spinach smooth rather than chopped, and flavored with tarragon and fresh pot herbs, or soft herbs, that work well

as vegetables or cooked greens.

Spinach is the binder, the neutral ingredient that stretches the herbs. This purée is sweet and sharp. You get sweetness and a mint-like quality from the tarragon, and an oniony counterpoint from the chives.

The roll is almost like a soufflé omelet,

and it goes really well with greens, allowing them to be the primary actors. The smooth-ness of the puree allows the herbs to infuse the soufflé. Since the purée is intensely flavored, you get only a little of it. I also wanted a soufflé with some longev-ity; a real soufflé has to be served right

This is the third of eight columns by Diane Forley, the chef and owner of the Manhattan restaurant Verbena. Her collaborator on these columns is William Grimes.

Updating mother's rolled soufflé.

away. This has more staying power. It won't fall, and you can keep it overnight and reheat it, either by steaming or by baking. It won't settle, and it retains its lightness

Semolina will add a little flavor and texture. I used it originally because I also made this as a corn soufflé, with fresh corn in the mix. You can serve it with sautéed baby vegetables. In spring, I sauté English peas, bibb lettuce and leeks in butter, chicken stock and herbs. In summer, I serve it with corn succotash: lima beans, corn, yellow and green squash and pearl onions. Another idea: make a sauce by adding butter and chicken stock to some of the filling. It's a great light dish for lunch.

There are a couple of things to remember.

Be sure to add the herbs in the blender; otherwise they turn black. Rolling is the tricky part. You cannot let the soufflé cool, and once you begin rolling, you cannot stop. No hesitation!

ROLLED SOUFFLÉ

Time: I hour

Nonstick baking spray 1/4 pound (1 stick) butter

cup all-purpose flour

cup semolina (also sold as pasta flour)

21/4 cups milk

cup heavy cream

10 large eggs, separated

1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper Salt and freshly ground black pepper

cup grated Parmesan cheese teaspoon cream of tartar

tablespoon sugar (optional) Spinach filling (recipe follows).

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a half-sheet (17 by 12 inch) jellyroll pan with parchment paper, and coat with nonstick baking spray. In a large (4 quart) saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Using a wooden spoon, mix in the flour and semolina; stir constantly for 3 minutes. Stir in a text stir in a semolina in the semol little milk to thin and smooth the mixture. Add the remaining milk and cream, beating with a whisk until smooth. Remove the pan from the heat, and slowly pour in the egg yolks while whisking vigorously. Whisk for 2 minutes. Season with cayenne, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir in cheese; set aside.

2. Using an electric mixer on low speed, beat the egg whites until frothy, and add the cream of tartar and sugar. Increase speed to medium-high, and continue to beat just until very soft peaks form. Gently but thor-oughly fold the whites, a third at a time, into the batter. Pour onto the parchment-lined sheet, filling pan three-quarters full. Bake 15 minutes, turn pan and bake 5 minutes, or until surface is golden brown.

3. Run a knife inside the edge of the baking pan to free souffic. Place a sheet of waxed paper or cotton cloth over the baking sheet, and invert onto a counter. Remove the pan and parchment paper. Spread the spinach filling to within an inch of the edges; lift a short end of the waxed paper or cloth until end curves, then roll souffle into a log shape. Transfer, seam side down, onto a plate, and serve cut into eight slices.

Yield: 4 main-course servings.

SPINACH FILLING

Time: 15 minutes

- 1/2 pound fresh spinach
- 1 tablespoon butter Salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf Freshly ground black pepper.
- L. Wash and drain spinach, but do not dry.
- In a large (4 quart) saucepan over low heat, melt the butter, and add spinach and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt. Cover, and steam until wilted, 3 to 5 minutes.
- 2. Transfer spinach and its liquid to a blender or food processor while hot. Add tarragon, chives and parsley. Purée until smooth, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Yield: about 11/2 cups