

SWISS CHARD RIBS GRATINÉED

by Joe Corso, Garden Director of Long Beach Organic





Ingredients

- 2 bunches Swiss chard, ribs separated from leaves (reserve leaves for another use)
- Salt
- Lemon Juice
- 2½ tablespoons Butter
- 3½ tablespoons Flour
- 2 cups milk
- Salt, Pepper & Nutmeg
- 1 clove Garlic (or to taste), minced or put through a garlic press
- A pinch of dried Thyme, or to taste
- ½ tablespoons Dijon Mustard, or to taste
- ½ cup grated Swiss cheese (or your favorite)

Directions

1. Trim the stalks, removing any clinging green bits and as much stringy membrane as possible. Cut them into 3-inch lengths, and then cut lengthwise into narrow sticks.
2. Quickly, so they don't darken, toss them in a saucepan with salt and a squeeze of lemon juice. Add just enough water to coat the bottom of the pan.
3. Bring the pot to the simmer, then reduce heat to low and braise slowly, covered, for at least an hour. Toss occasionally and add a dribble of water if necessary.
**Note: if the chard is too liquid, remove the cover. When finished, the ribs should be meltingly tender and the liquid reduced to a syrup.*
4. Meanwhile, make a béchamel sauce: Melt the butter in a saucepan. Stir in the flour. Cook the roux, stirring with a wooden spoon, for two minutes. Add a little of the milk and stir until a paste forms.
5. Switch to a whisk and beat in the rest of the milk, a little at a time, to prevent lumps from forming. Bring the sauce to a simmer, stirring with the spoon—it will thicken at this point. Continue to simmer, stirring, for a couple of minutes.
6. Season the sauce to taste with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Add the garlic, thyme and mustard.
7. Butter a gratin dish or pie plate. Preheat the oven to 425° F with the rack on the upper level.
8. When the chard is finished cooking, stir in enough of the béchamel sauce to coat it well (you may not need to use it all). Stir in half the cheese and transfer to the prepared dish, topping with the remaining cheese.

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9. Bake on the top rack of the oven until bubbly and browned, about 20 minutes. If the dish needs help browning, run it briefly under the broiler.