



SPINACH CAKE

2 bunches spinach, about 2 pounds (can also use chard, mustard or turnip) 2 medium leeks
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 teaspoons salt
Freshly ground pepper
Whole nutmeg
2 cups whole milk
6 large eggs
Pinch of cayenne
A little Parmesan

1. Cut the spinach into 1-inch-wide ribbons, discarding any tough stems. Swish the greens in a large basin of cold water, then lift them out into a colander. Repeat the process twice more, with fresh water each time.
2. Trim the leeks and peel off the tough outer layer. Cut into small dice. Fill a bowl with warm tap water and add the leeks. Agitate them with your hand. Let the dirt and sand settle in the bowl, then scoop the leeks from the water. Repeat twice more.
3. Melt the butter in a deep, heavy-bottomed pan over medium heat. Add the leeks, season with salt and pepper, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until they are tender but still green, about 5 minutes.
4. Turn up the heat and grate a little nutmeg over the leeks. Now add the drained spinach in layers, sprinkling each layer with a little salt. Cover tightly and let the spinach steam rapidly over the leeks, removing the lid to stir once or twice. When the spinach is just barely wilted, 2 minutes or less, turn out the contents of the pot onto a platter and let cool. Be sure to save any cooking juices.
5. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. When the spinach-leek mixture is cool, taste for seasoning and adjust - it should be highly seasoned. In a blender or food processor, purée the cooked vegetables with the milk and eggs in batches, adding a little more salt, pepper and a pinch of cayenne. Add any remaining cooking juices to one of the batches and whiz again.

6. Pour the soupy green batter into a buttered baking dish or a 9- or 10-inch deep-dish pie pan. Grate a scant 2 tablespoons Parmesan over the top and bake, uncovered, for 45 minutes, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool to room temperature, cut into wedges and serve with herb salad. *Serves 6.*

Adapted from "A Platter of Figs and Other Recipes," by David Tanis.