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The Midday Entrée

Monday, June 2, 2008

The Music:

Symphony No. 1, Op. 55, by Sir Edward Elgar
London Philharmonic Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin, conductor
[RCA 60380]

The Recipe: English Cheddar Beer Soup

2 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only), cut into 1/4-inch dice (2 cups)
2 medium carrots, cut into 1/4-inch dice (1 cup)
2 celery ribs, cut into 1/4-inch dice (1 cup)
2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic
1 bay leaf
1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups whole milk
1 3/4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth (14 fl oz)
1 (12-oz) bottle ale such as Bass
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 lb extra-sharp Cheddar (preferably English; rind removed if necessary), grated (4 cups)
4 bacon slices (3 1/2 oz total), cooked and crumbled

Wash leeks in a bowl of cold water, agitating water, then lift out leeks and drain in a colander. Cook leeks, carrots, celery, garlic, and bay leaf in butter in a 4-quart heavy saucepan over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to moderately low and sprinkle flour over vegetables, then cook, stirring occasionally, 3 minutes. Add milk, broth, and beer in a stream, whisking, then simmer, whisking occasionally, 5 minutes. Stir in Worcestershire sauce, mustard, salt, and pepper.

Add cheese by handfuls, stirring constantly, and cook until cheese is melted, 3 to 4 minutes (do not boil). Discard bay leaf.

Serve sprinkled with bacon. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

It's that time of year again, and the recipe feature will be on hiatus for the summer; look for new offerings to resume after Labor Day. Bon appétit, and thanks for listening!