

# A Rough and Ready Turnip Potage

| SERVES 3 TO 4

On one equinoctial day everything imaginable was in the market, but sudden rain, wind, and cold meanly undermined what should have been the fulfillment of the season's promise. Like others, I scurried home as soon as I could. While putting away my produce, I decided what I needed was a big pot of soup. I quickly chopped some leeks, a half dozen turnips, and a potato, then stewed them all in a little butter with a few sprigs of thyme. Salt and water were added, and I went out into the garden. The cold had chilled me, but it had also made me energetic, so I got to work cleaning up my beds and forgot about the soup. When I finally came inside, it had simmered down to a thick and chunky potage.

I rather liked the uneven shapes and varied textures that came from hurried cutting. It had a pleasing rough and ready look. A smidgen of cream went into the pot, some freshly ground pepper, and I served myself a bowl. I had another bowl, then started dipping into the pot. This soup was no less compelling to me than chocolate cake might have been to another. Of course, nothing tastes better than what we eat when we're really hungry. That's when the tongue can detect anything that's not of the first quality, any little slip, flaw, or falsity that might be present. There was none with these vegetables.

6 slender leeks, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch across

3 small Yukon Gold potatoes

6 small turnips

1½ tablespoons unsalted butter

a few thyme sprigs

sea salt and freshly ground pepper

cream

chopped parsley or thyme

1. Slice the white parts of the leeks crosswise and wash them well. Scrub the potatoes, quarter them lengthwise, and chop. If the turnip skins are tender looking, quarter and chop the turnips without peeling.
2. Melt the butter in a soup pot. Add the vegetables, give them a toss, then add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water and the thyme. Simmer for 5 minutes, then add 5 cups water and 1½ teaspoons salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer until the vegetables are tender, 25 to 30 minutes. Taste for salt, season with pepper, and stir in a few spoonfuls of cream. Garnish with chopped parsley or thyme.

**VARIATION:** A more refined bisque can be made with the same ingredients and a few minor changes: Use a good vegetable stock or chicken stock to enrich the flavor; don't let it cook down so much, puree it, and add a cup of light cream. If you have the greens, simmer them until they are completely tender, then chop them up and add them to the soup. Garnish with fresh thyme and its blossoms.