

Fennel Gratin

Serves 8

From Joyce Goldstein.

- 2 pounds fennel
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter + a bit more for the topping
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup hot milk
- 1 cup hot cream
- 2 egg yolks (optional)
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese + more for topping
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- Freshly grated nutmeg (optional)
- ½ cup chopped toasted hazelnuts

Instructions: Cut the fennel bulbs into quarters or eighths; remove and discard some of the tough central

core and any discolored outer leaves. Parboil in lightly salted water until just tender. Drain well and set aside.

Melt 4 tablespoons of butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Add the flour and cook, stirring, for about 5 minutes; do not let the mixture color. Slowly whisk in the hot milk and cream and continue to whisk until thickened and the raw flour taste is gone, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat, whisk in the egg yolks if using, and the Parmesan. Season with salt, pepper, and a bit of nutmeg if you like it.

Preheat an oven to 350°. Butter a 2-quart baking dish.

Place the fennel in the prepared baking dish. Spoon the sauce evenly over the top. Sprinkle with toasted hazelnuts and a bit more grated Parmesan cheese. Dot with butter and bake until golden, about 30 to 40 minutes.