

# Chefs A' Field

Culinary Adventures That Begin on the Farm



## FRIED OYSTERS WITH NETTLE PUR PURÉE

BY CHEF GREG ATKINSON

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### FRIED OYSTERS

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking powder  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon fresh ground black pepper  
Oil, for frying  
Nettle Purée (recipe follows)

### NETTLE PURÉE

2 quarts stinging nettle tops, freshly picked  
2 tablespoons butter  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup uncooked white rice  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon sea salt, or to taste  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon fresh ground black pepper  
3 cups chicken broth

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### HARVESTING NETTLES

**When harvesting** and handling nettles be sure to wear sturdy gloves. Before nettles are cooked, they contain an irritating chemical not unlike the chemical in bee stings. Once cooked however, the irritating chemical disintegrates and the nettles become both nourishing and delectable.

**If the nettles** have any foreign material in them or if they were picked on a dusty day, you may need to wash them. Wearing sturdy rubber gloves, plunge them into a sink full of water then lift them out of the water, leaving any debris behind. Shake off the excess water and put the nettles in a colander.

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### **NETTLE PURÉE**

**Melt** the butter with the olive oil in a heavy saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the leek and sauté, stirring until the leek is soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the rice and sauté just a moment to warm the grains.

**Pile** in the nettles and pour on the broth. Bring the soup to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer until the rice is very tender, about 20 minutes. Transfer soup to a blender in small batches and purée. Pass the puréed soup through a strainer. Serve hot.

### **THE OYSTERS**

**For instructions on shucking oysters see recipe from episode 13.**

**Rinse** the shucked oysters in cold water to remove any bits of shell and drain them in a single layer on paper towels.

**In a small bowl**, stir together flour, baking powder, and pepper. Heat the oil in a cast iron skillet over medium-high heat to 375°F, or until a cube of bread dropped in floats immediately to the surface and browns in 1 minute.

**Roll** the oysters in the flour mixture, shake off excess flour and fry the oysters for 2 to 3 minutes, turning once. Drain on a brown paper bag.

**Properly** fried, oysters are firm but moist, sealed in a soft-crisp coat. To insure success, wait to apply the seasoned flour until just before the oysters are plunged into the oil. Make sure the oil is at the proper temperature and avoid overcrowding the pan. If frying oysters for more than just one or two servings fry them in batches, holding them in a warm oven on a cookie sheet lined with a brown paper bag.

### **ON THE PLATE**

**Ladle** the nettle purée into bowls and plant the fried oysters on top. Serve immediately.

*Courtesy of Chefs A' Field.*