

CAULIFLOWER AND BROCCOLI FLAN WITH SPINACH BECHAMEL

Sformato di Cavolfiore e Broccolo con Balsamella di Spinaci

In typical trattoria fashion, this dish serves as the meal's antipasto, which is followed by the pasta course. What to drink: A light, dry red from Carmignano, a Tuscan wine district known for its blends of Sangiovese with Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Try: Capezzana Barco Reale di Carmignano.

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— ingredients —

2 1/2 cups cauliflower florets

2 1/2 cups broccoli florets

2 6-ounce bags baby spinach leaves

6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) butter

1/4 cup all purpose flour

2/3 cup whole milk

2/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

— preparation —

Cook cauliflower and broccoli in large pot of boiling salted water until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Drain, reserving 2/3 cup cooking liquid. Transfer vegetables to large bowl. Cool.

Rinse spinach, then toss in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just wilted. Drain and cool. Squeeze spinach dry; finely chop.

Melt butter in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and whisk until smooth, about 2 minutes. Gradually whisk in milk and reserved 2/3 cup vegetable cooking liquid. Whisk constantly over medium heat until sauce thickens and boils, about 3 minutes. Stir in spinach and cheese.

Using fingers, coarsely crumble cauliflower and broccoli in bowl. Add spinach béchamel sauce; stir to blend. Season with salt and pepper. Butter 1 1/2-quart baking dish. Spread vegetable mixture in prepared dish. (Can be made 6 hours ahead. Cover and chill.)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Bake flan until puffed and heated through, about 25 minutes if at room temperature and 35 minutes if chilled. Serve hot.

Makes 6 servings.

