

## BAKED EGGS IN SPINACH NESTS

*This dish looks great on a buffet—gently cooked eggs in a spinach cup on a bed of sautéed leeks. Easy to prep ahead of time and perfect for a winter brunch gathering.*

Serves 4

½ pound loose spinach, stemmed, washed and spun dry  
1 Tbsp. olive oil  
2½ Tbsp. unsalted butter  
2 medium leeks  
½ cup dry white wine  
salt and pepper to taste  
4 Tbsp. heavy cream (optional)  
4 eggs, room temperature

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees and butter the bottom of a small-medium gratin dish.

Heat a large sauté pan on high and add 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil. Once the butter is hot, add all the spinach, mounding it in the pan. Use large tongs to rotate the spinach, coating it in the oils. Continue rotating the spinach with the tongs as it wilts. When the spinach is completely wilted, remove from the heat. Season the spinach with salt and pepper and transfer to a sheet pan; cool in the refrigerator.

Remove the top green and roots of the leeks. Using the white and light green portions only, cut the leeks into 2-inch-long pieces. Then cut the pieces in half. Julienne the leeks into thin ¼-inch strips (yielding 2½–3 cups of julienned leeks). Place the leeks in a bowl of cold water for 5 minutes, allowing the dirt/sand to sink to the bottom. Skim the leeks from the surface of the water with your hands or a sieve. Let the leeks drain for a few minutes before cooking.

In a large sauté pan melt 1½ tablespoons butter on medium-high heat. Add the leeks and stir to coat. Once the leeks begin to soften and wilt, reduce the heat to medium and continue cooking the leeks for 3–4 minutes. Increase the heat to high and add the white wine. Reduce the wine until there is very little liquid remaining in the pan. Remove the pan from the heat. Transfer the leeks to the buttered gratin dish, making sure the leeks cover the bottom of the dish, and sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

Gently squeeze the excess liquid from the spinach and divide into fourths. Mound the four portions on the leeks. Make a well in the center of the spinach at least 1 inch deep and 2 inches wide, making a small bowl or cup with the spinach. Drizzle 1 tablespoon of cream into the bottom of each cup; this is optional.

Crack an egg into a small ramekin and gently transfer the egg into the spinach nest. If a yolk happens to break, set it aside and try another. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and bake for 10–12 minutes. Bake until the surface of the whites is still slightly runny and the yolks are soft. The eggs will continue cooking a small degree after removing from the heat so be sure not to overcook.

Easy serving suggestion: Have the leeks and spinach prepped the day before serving.