

Dilled Asparagus Souffle (from *The Enchanted Broccoli Forest*, Mollie Katzen)

Delicious! And very pretty when it comes out of the oven.

Yield: about 4 servings, 40 minutes to prepare; 40 minutes to bake

A little melted butter for the soufflé dish

1 ½ lbs asparagus

3 Tbsp butter

½ cup minced onion

½ tsp salt

fresh black pepper to taste

1 tsp dry mustard

½ tsp dried tarragon

4 Tbsp unbleached white flour

1 ½ cups hot milk (lowfat okay)

5 eggs, separated and at room temperature (yolks optional)

3 Tbsp minced fresh dill

½ packed cup grated mild cheddar (optional)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly brush a 2-quart souffle dish with melted butter.

Break off and discard any tough ends of each asparagus spear. Cut the spears into ½-inch pieces, on the diagonal and steam them until just barely tender. Rinse under cold water; drain well and set aside.

Melt the butter in a medium-sized saucepan. Add onion, salt, pepper, mustard, and tarragon, and cook, stirring, over medium heat for about 8 minutes, or until the onion is soft and translucent. Turn the heat way down, and stir constantly as you sprinkle in the flour. The resulting roux will be very thick. Keep cooking it another 2 to 3 minutes anyway, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon.

Drizzle in the hot milk, whisking constantly. Continue to cook and stir over very low heat 5 minutes longer-until you have a thick, smooth sauce. Transfer to a large bowl.

(Optional: Beat the egg yolks in a small separate bowl, then drizzle them into the sauce, beating well.) Stir in dill, cheese, and asparagus.

Place the egg whites in a separate large bowl and beat until stiff. Fold them into the first mixture, and transfer to the prepared pan. Bake undisturbed for 40 minutes, then serve tout de suite!