

## Rooreh-Roarín' Cream of Miner's Lettuce Soup

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Miner's lettuce grows like crazy in the darkest part of my Mediterranean-climate garden, where only dirt is visible, where no other plant dares grow. Miner's lettuce is OK with looking at the darker side of life, a thriving rebel. First called "Rooreh" by the original Ohlone people of my area, Miner's lettuce makes a delicious, fresh salad, or deep green soup, very similar to spinach salad or soup.

Nature acts as the farmer here, since miner's lettuce grows naturally with winter rains, all through spring, and it regrows every year on its own! My first miner's lettuce patch was created from a few transplanted plants from my niece's Oakland backyard, it spread slowly each year. But the biggest and fattest California miner's lettuce I ever grew was from a single *Larner's* seed packet sprinkled all around my house in fall; wow.

I add wild spring onions to this recipe because they also grow wild around my house (these are not native to California). Wild onions take time to clean, and they shrivel up so much when you cook them you wonder why you spent the time pulling. But both miner's lettuce and wild onions are so fun to bring to garden-lover supper parties. Great when you don't want to run to store just for some onions or a little salad.

I finely chop left-over tops of wild onions, to dry and use later like chives. (Always check online to confirm I.D. of any wild harvested plant.) Miner's lettuce changes shape as it grows, so look at many photos to confirm. Confirm the I.D. online, try it several times before you share, and you can look your friends in the eye (after they've had a few bites), and say you collected wild California Miner's lettuce from your own native garden to make this soup, and that nature effortlessly grows this vegetable for you each year!

Follow my recipe below, or *any* recipe for cream of spinach/watercress soup:

1 onion  
1 big handful wild spring onions (*optional*) cleaned, white part plus 2" green  
3 Tbl butter  
1 Tbl flour (*optional*)  
5-7 cups of miner's lettuce: mostly tops but some stems ok  
1 potato (or more miner's lettuce and a few green veggies like zucchini)  
5 cups combo: chicken stock and milk or cream, leftover Christmas ham juices/milk, veggie stock...  
1/2 tsp paprika  
dash nutmeg  
salt and pepper

Sauté chopped onions (and chopped wild onions if you have) for five minutes in butter. If using flour, add and sauté on low about 5-10 minutes as a soup thickener. You can substitute milk with cream if you don't want to use flour as thickener, or add potatoes/veggies to thicken if no dairy or flour is desired. I prefer flour and milk since it's what I usually have on hand. If used flour, add liquid slowly, stirring with whisk till creamy - until all liquid has been added, and there are no clumps. After adding liquid, add miner's lettuce, potatoes or any extra veggies, bring to boil, then simmer for 15 minutes, or until potatoes are soft. If using milk, stir frequently.

I blend with blender wand (soup queen), but you can use a blender **carefully** (stems can gum up) or Cuisinart. Add seasonings and salt/pepper to taste. I freeze in little containers, makes a delicious, healthy first course for any dinner.