

N'duja Creamed Greens

Serves 4-6 | 20 minutes prep + 60 minutes cook time

When I was growing up every holiday meal included something creamy, an indulgent dish usually made only for special occasions. For years I made my mother's creamed onions, using the same canned pearl onions she did but upping the ante on her white sauce by adding three kinds of cheese and a healthy slug of bourbon. But Inspired years ago by Portland chef Jason French's creamed kale at the now-closed Ned Ludd, now I make creamy greens for celebration dinners.

These greens get extra flavor and a little chile heat from n'duja, the soft, spreadable salami originally from southern Italy I like to call spicy pork butter. N'duja (en-DOO-ya) comes from cucina povere, poor people's food, and originally used the scraps and organ meat left over after selling the better cuts. Modern versions combine leg, shoulder, and belly mixed with moderately hot Calabrian chiles.

1 bunch Italian kale

1 medium onion

1 cup water

¼ cup chopped pancetta

2 tablespoons flour

1 cup heavy cream

¼ cup n'duja

4 tablespoons olive oil, divided

1 teaspoon salt

Step 1 Chop the onion and cook it in 2 tablespoons of olive oil with the salt while you chop the kale.

Step 2 Coarsely chop the greens, including the stems. Add to the onion, cook 2-3 minutes, add water, reduce heat, and cover. Cook for 45 minutes, checking about midway and adding water ½ cup at a time if there's less than a ½ inch in the bottom of the pot.

Step 3 Chop the pancetta into small pieces, cook in a heavy skillet over medium heat with the remaining 2 T olive oil until lightly browned, about 5 minutes.

Step 4 Stir in the flour to make a roux, cook for 2 minutes, then add cream. Bring to a boil and reduce heat.

Step 5 Add the n'duja and use a spoon to break it up until it melts into the cream.

Step 6 If there's more than about a ½ inch of water in the pot of cooked greens, drain some off and save it. Add the greens to the cream sauce and simmer for 15 minutes or until it thickens.