

## CELERIAC AND PEAR SOUP WITH BACON DRESSING

Serves 4

- 50ml vegetable oil
- 8 smoked streaky bacon rashers, roughly chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 750ml chicken stock
- 25g unsalted butter
- 1 large onion, finely sliced
- Pinch of salt
- 200g celeriac, peeled and diced
- 2 pears, peeled and diced
- 250ml full-fat milk
- 2 shallots, finely diced
- Pepper
- 200ml dry white wine
- 50ml medium dry sherry, optional

1 Place a heavy-based saucepan over a high heat. Add 25ml vegetable oil and 6 bacon rashers. Sweat for 2-3 minutes until just cooked, then add the bay leaves and peppercorns. Cover with the chicken stock, bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Set aside to sit for 10 minutes, then sieve the stock, discarding the bacon.

2 Return the same pan to the heat, add the remaining 25ml vegetable oil and half the butter. Sweat the onion with a pinch of salt until translucent. Add the celeriac, stir to coat with the oil, sweat for 5 minutes and cover with a lid for a further 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the pears and bacon-infused chicken stock, bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the milk, return to the boil, then blend.

3 For the dressing, melt the remaining butter in a saucepan, add the shallots and season. Cook over a gentle heat until translucent. Add the white wine, turn up the heat and reduce until almost gone. Add the remaining 2 bacon rashers and cook for a further 5 minutes.

4 To serve, pour the soup into 4 warm bowls and divide the bacon dressing equally between each. Finish with a splash of sherry, if using. ➤

