**Colcannon Soup with Cheese Straws**

*Serves 4*

*The secret of this soup is not to overcook the cabbage.*

**Cheese straws**

175 g (6 oz) rolled puff pastry, thawed if frozen

all purpose flour, for dusting

50 g (2 oz) mature Dubliner Cheddar cheese, grated

1 egg yolk beaten with 2 tsp water

coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

**Colcannon Soup**

50 g (2 oz) rindless streaky bacon, diced

1 onion, finely chopped

1 potato, finely diced

1 leek, trimmed and thinly sliced

150 g (5 oz) Savoy cabbage, thick stalks removed and shredded

700 ml (3 cups) vegetable stock

150 ml (2/3 cup) heavy cream

25 g (1/4 stick) butter, diced

Salt & Freshly ground black pepper to season.

**To garnish**

4 slices cured ham i.e. Parma-ham

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.

To make the cheese straws, place the puff pastry on a lightly floured work surface and sprinkle over the Cheddar in an even layer. Fold in half width ways to enclose the cheese layer completely and roll out again to its original size, using a little extra flour if necessary. Brush all over with the beaten egg and place in the fridge for 15 minutes to rest.

Take the chilled cheese pastry and cut it into 10 cm lengths, each 1 cm wide. Hold the ends of each strip between your fingers and twist the ends in opposite directions. Arrange the twisted strips on non-stick baking sheets and sprinkle a little salt and pepper over each one. Bake for 10 minutes or until crisp and golden brown, then transfer to a wire rack and leave to cool.

To prepare the crispy cured ham garnish, lay the slices of ham on a baking sheet lined with greaseproof paper. Roast in the oven for 5 - 8 minutes until crispy, then remove from the oven and leave to cool.

In the meantime, prepare the colcannon soup, heat a large pan and sauté the diced bacon over a medium to high heat for 2 minutes. Stir in the onion, potato and leek then cover with a lid and saute gently over a medium heat for 2 - 3 minutes until well softened but not coloured, stirring occasionally.

Pour the vegetable stock and bring to the boil, then add the cabbage and season to taste. Simmer for a 10 – 15 minutes until the cabbage has softened.

Remove from the heat and blitz until a smooth consistency. Pour in the cream and butter and pulse 2 – 3 times with a handblender. Check the seasoning and keep warm until needed.

Ladle the colcannon soup into cappuccino cups or warmed serving bowls and arrange a cheese straw to the side and top with the crispy parma ham.