Week 3

Chowders, Bisques and Fish Soups



Soups

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Week 3

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Although they can be classified in the main soup categories that we have seen so far, fish soups and chowders deserve their own chapter.

Any country bordered by some type of sea or ocean prides itself with a “famous” fish soup. In the North, where the temperature of the ocean is colder with different types of fish, you will find the “cotriade”. In North-America, you will, of course hear about chowders.

In any case, what will make a fish soup a success, is the freshness of the ingredients that are used.

You may leave in a rural area, where fish is not so easy to find. Frozen fish can actually be a very good choice as long as it is of the best quality. Typically, if you see “frozen on the boat” it is a good sign. Indeed, it is best to have a fish that was frozen shortly after it was caught (on the boat) than a “fresh” fish that travelled many hours before arriving on your table.

CHOWDER SOUPS

Derived from the French word ‘chaudière’ that means the cooking pot in which it is cooked and from the Latin word ‘caldaria’ that is similar to the English cauldron. As a word derived from a New England word, ‘chowder’, originated in Newfoundland from the Breton fisherman and was made with the catch of the day along with other foods that were available and cooked in a large pot. It is to be speculated whether the fish soup itself such as Bouillabaisse came from Newfoundland. Yet another possibility opens out the fact that chowder may have been derived from the Old English word, ‘jowter’ that means fisherman or one who sells fish.

Pork, potatoes and onions can be included in chowders, though the classic version was made from seafood with chunky, rich and thick soups also coming under the category of chowders. Manhattan is popularly known for its various chowders that are cooked like a hearty broth. Corn, vegetables, shellfish and fish are the main flavoring ingredients for preparing chowder. Vegetables should be rinsed well, peeled and trimmed before being cut into small and even sized pieces so that they will be cooked thoroughly.

Broth that is seasoned well with a full body, water and stock should be kept ready. The liquid should be brought to a simmer with the required ingredients, aromatics and seasoning to give it flavor. Recipes should be referred to for specific guidance.

Chowders acquire their texture from thickeners such as potatoes and flour. Garnishes, finishing ingredients, seasoning and final flavoring should be kept ready ahead of time to be added during the final cooking process at the right time. Cream if preferred should be simmered and added to the chowder when it is simmering.

By using the method of thickening called singer (san'-je), the flour that is used to thicken traditional chowder is prepared or cooked with the aromatic unlike the method used for making velouté where it is cooked separately. When cooking the aromatics, more fat is used for the singer method as this is important to successfully complete it. As the Roux would be hot, the liquid that should be added must be at room temperature or it should be cool in order for the Roux not to turn lumpy. When the liquid is being added it is necessary to stir continuously so that the chowder has a smooth texture with the finished liquid.

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CHOWDER RECIPE

Basic recipe for ½ gal/1.9 L	Ingredients:
Cream soup	• One or more flavoring ingredients, such as vegetable or seafood. • ½ gal/1.9 L of cooking liquid – stock, broth or water • A thickening agent such as blond Roux, flour or potatoes. • Seasoning and flavoring such as salt, pepper, spice sachet and or Bouquet Garni. • Finishing and garnishing ingredients such as heavy cream, salt pork, bacon, small dice of the main ingredient, mince or Chiffonade of herbs.

METHOD

The bacon or the salt pork should be rendered and the aromatics should be added. The rendered fat may need additional butter or oil according to the method for introducing the Roux to the soup. If the singer method is to be followed where the Roux is added as part of the cooking process, then more fat would be needed. Some of the chowders utilize a mix of vegetables like leeks, carrots, garlic, peppers and onions while light-colored chowders use a combination of aromatic vegetables such as celery, leeks and onions. The aromatics should be cooked slowly on low heat in the rendered fat, till the vegetables become translucent, tender and start releasing their juices.

At the start of making shellfish-based chowder with oysters, clams and mussels, the main ingredient should be steamed in water or stock till they open. The broth should be strained through a cheesecloth or filter and reserved. The meat should be chopped and kept aside.

Cook the Roux in the fat till it turns pale gold in color. It is very important to have the right amount of fat to cook the Roux in the pan for the singer method to be successfully completed.

The stock should be blended into the Roux and the lumps should be whisked. The reserved broth and the stock should be whisked in gently. While stirring continuously, the soup should be brought to a simmer. Adjustments should be made and seasoning must be checked. Some of the ingredients should be added to the soup at specific intervals according to their thickness of structure and the result the continued or prolonged cooking process might have on them. Though potatoes need time to cook, peas that are tender will become pasty and gray if cooked for too long. The fresh flavor of a spice sachet will lose its refreshing quality if steeped in the soup for too long a period. Ingredients should be added after referring to individual recipes.

While the soup acquires flavor along with the simmering ingredients, they should be checked to see if they are tender and fully cooked. The seasoning should be adjusted and the soup should be stirred and skimmed through the cooking process. A minimum of one hour is needed for simmering so the chowder can acquire the flavor and thicken to preferred consistency. The soup would now be ready for finishing and may be quickly cooled and refrigerated to facilitate easy serving.

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Chowders are normally garnished in batches after finishing. The soup should be simmered on medium heat and a sufficient amount of hot cream should be added to enhance the soup but not overpower the flavor. The main ingredient that has been kept aside or reserved and the garnish can be added to the chowder. The seasoning should be adjusted and the soup should continue simmering. The chowder can be served immediately in bowls or cups that have heated.

The quality of the finished or completed chowder should be evaluated. The main flavoring ingredient/s should be balanced and should support the aromatic finishing flavors as the main property of a good chowder including a slightly thick consistency similar to heavy cream and a texture that is velvety. If overcooked or if too much of the thickener is used, chowders take on a pasty feel and taste. If the flavor is not up to the mark, it would be due to the fact that too much liquid had been added or lack of a sufficient amount of the main flavoring. The main taste and flavor of the soup will be hidden if too much cream is added.

TYPES OF CHOWDER SOUPS

Chowder belongs to the variety of soups that are enhanced with fatback, salt pork, any kind of seafood, traditional usage of saltine crackers or ship biscuit that has been crushed, milk and thickened with flour. Known as clam chowder to some Americans, chowders are cooked with milk and cream in a number of places or made with tomato as in 'Manhattan Clam Chowder'. Corn chowder is made with whole corn maize kernels.

Clam chowder, fish chowder and corn chowder have been popular in Atlantic Canada and New England. Seafood chowder has been a favorite and traditional dish in Ireland. At times, clam chowder has a coarse grained consistency that occurs when there is sand still remaining in the clams during the preparation time.

Chowder name:	**Description:**
New England Clam Chowder:	Made of milk or cream or with a cream base, New England clam chowder is also traditionally made with bacon or salt pork, potatoes, clams, flour or hardtack. Tomatoes could not be used in clam chowders according to a 1939 bill that was passed and was considered illegal by the Maine Legislature. The people of the Midwest occasionally referred to it as Boston Clam Chowder. The New England traditional chowder was layered with ingredients and crackers like Crown Pilot.

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Manhattan Clam Chowder:	With tomato used to enhance the red coloring and flavor, the Manhattan clam chowder has a clear broth. This chowder was known as the 'Fulton Fish Market clam chowder and the 'New York clam chowder' in the 1890s. The people in Maine called it the 'Manhattan clam chowder' in the early 1900s. Typically, restaurants serve either the Manhattan chowder or the New England chowder, but not both in the restaurant. Though no actual date heralds the Manhattan chowder in the 1930s, the cream-based New England version has been in circulation since the mid 18th century. Very often, red and white chowders are served with clam cakes by restaurants in Northern Rhode Island, while white and clear chowders are a favorite on the southern coast. With tomato replacing milk, tomato-based stews were initiated by the Portuguese immigrants in Rhode Island as an integral and traditional part of Portuguese cuisine, according to Good Eats. The modified version as the 'Manhattan-style' clam chowder was not accepted by the New Englanders who made fun of the people of New York by calling them 'New Yorkers' in an insulting manner.
Rhode Island Clam Chowder:	The traditional Rhode Island clam chowder contains clear broth. Well-reputed and long-established restaurants and hotels in New England and on Block Island serve clear chowders, while on the south coast of the state, the tourists prefer the white chowders and the locals prefer clear chowders with the traditional version containing broth, quahogs, onions, bacon and potatoes. Red chowder is served as a Rhode Island clam chowder in some parts of the state that has potatoes and a tomato broth base. Unlike the Manhattan red chowder, it does not contain carrots, beans, chunks of tomatoes and other vegetables and has been served for decades at memorable establishments such as Crescent Park and Rocky Point. Though clear chowder has been served as the traditional Rhode Island chowder, the Rhode Islanders associate this red chowder as the state's native chowder.
Outer Banks Clam Chowder:	This version of the clam chowder has bacon, clear broth, onions and potatoes with flour as the thickening agent and is served throughout North Carolina's Outer banks region. This clam chowder is seasoned with large amounts of black and/or white pepper and sometimes with hot pepper sauce or chopped green onions.

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Other Clam Chowder Variations:	With their own unique style, some of the restaurants serve clam chowders that do not come under these four categories. Normally clam chowders are served with small hexagonal oyster crackers and saltine crackers. Clam chowders are served in the United States as a creamy New England style clam chowder and at times served especially in sourdough bread bowls in San Francisco and is a signature dish since 1849 being popular with the tourists who are fond of sourdough. Smoked salmon is added instead of smoked pork to the New England style chowder in Portland and Seattle. Made with fish, cream, onions, and/or corn, Fish chowder is very like clam chowder and is made of shredded fish like cod as a substitute for clams.
Southern Illinois Chowder:	The New England and the Manhattan chowders differ from the Southern Illinois chowder. Originating from the French-Indian term in Edwards County, Illinois, it means besides the chowder that is eaten, but also the social gathering where it is cooked and eaten. Introduced by the early settlers or 'backwoodsmen', the chowder is a popular dish in the southern part of the United States. The 'chowder time' traditionally starts when the tomatoes begin to ripen and dwindles when the heavy frost settles in.
Corn Chowder:	Very much like the New England clam chowder, the corn chowder is made with corn and bacon that are substituted for clams in the recipe. As a popular dish in Vermont, the saying goes that it is connected to money and is a natural and harmonious combination.

TIPS FOR MAKING THE PERFECT CHOWDER

In order to achieve the preferred results, a chowder soup may be thickened with a White Roux, a Blond Roux, potatoes or flour.

Flavor can be developed by adding more ingredients at the right time. Some of the ingredients can be added for flavor earlier on in the cooking process and also to give them time to cook evenly. Other ingredients such as a spice sachet or bouquet garni may be added at a later stage so that the texture and the individual flavor are retained.

The taste can be enhanced with garnishing as one of the ways to influence and add flavors. The ingredients that are chosen to garnish a soup may be cut to the required size and shape and added towards the final stages of the cooking process. The garnishing ingredients may include crème fraîche, heavy cream, Julienned or diced main flavoring ingredient, minced or Chiffonade herbs or liaison.

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BISQUES SOUPS

Cooked the traditional way, Bisques are generally based on crustaceans like crayfish, lobster, crab, shrimps and rice, flour or bread is used for thickening it. Along with other ingredients, crustaceans are crushed to obtain the most flavors and then strained. The soup that results resembles that of a cream soup.

Bisques that are contemporary have a Roux or a vegetable puree as a thickener and may be based on other ingredients other than crustaceans. Preparation of vegetable Bisque is done in the same way as a puree. Additional thickness can be provided with Roux, a starchy vegetable like potato or rice, if the main vegetable does not have enough of starch. The soup can be pureed until smooth when the vegetables are tender. As a result of the same way of preparation, the distinguishing quality between a puree and Bisque cannot be defined. Bisque is highly seasoned, creamy and thick that is of French origin and made in the classic way with pureed crustaceans in French cuisine.

The name, Bisque, is speculated to originate from Biscay, like the bay of Biscay in the French Basque region. But as per the analogy to a biscuit, the crustaceans are 'twice cooked' or 'bis cuites' as they are initially sautéed lightly in their shells, simmered in aromatic ingredients and then pureed.

The meat and shells of the crustaceans should be well rinsed and then crushed or coarsely chopped. Related recipes should be consulted. Before use in a Bisque, the quality of the stored stock, broth and fumets should be checked. A minimal amount can be boiled and tasted for any off taste, odors or sourness.

The vegetables that are to be used in the Bisque should be peeled, trimmed and chopped. Some of the ingredients that may be used in the soup can be mirepoix, garlic or chopped onions. The ingredients that are used frequently may be sweet paprika, brandy, wine and tomato paste that would add color and flavor.

Though contemporary Bisque is thickened with flour or a Roux, rice can be used to thicken traditional Bisque. If a prepared velouté is used, other thickeners may not be necessary. The finishing ingredients for most of the Bisques are brandy, sherry and cream. A bisque is garnished with diced and cooked pieces of the main flavoring ingredient.

A heavy gauge pot, a strainer or cheesecloth and pureeing equipment and equipment for holding and storing Bisques are the equipment requirements when making a cream soup.

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BISQUE SOUPS RECIPE

Basic recipe for 1 gal/ 3.84 L	Ingredients:
Bisque Soup:	• 2 lb / 907 g of one or more flavoring ingredients, such as crustaceans shells (shrimps, crab, lobster, crayfish or a combination) • 1 gal 32 fl oz / 4.80 L of cooking liquid – Shellfish or fish stock, fumet, broth or shellfish Velouté • A thickening agent, if not using a prepared Velouté such as blond Roux, flour or rice • Seasoning and flavoring such as salt, pepper, spice sachet and or bouquet garni. • 1 lb / 454 g of mirepoix • Tomato paste or purée • Finishing and garnishing ingredients, such as 16 fl oz / 480 ml heavy cream, diced or other cuts of the main flavoring ingredient • Mince or Chiffonade of herbs • Sherry or brandy

METHOD

The shells must be well rinsed and the bigger shells of crab or lobster can be chopped. They should be drained and dried well. The color and flavor of traditional Bisques are derived from crab, lobster, shrimps or crayfish. Sometimes, fishmongers who sell live lobsters, also have frozen lobster heads that they sell for a lower price. A combination or one type of crustacean can be used. The crushed shells should be browned in cooking fat and stirred frequently till they become red or bright pink.

The mirepoix should be added to the pan and cooked till the vegetables are tender for 10 to 15 minutes. The brandy can be added and then ignited. As soon as the flames go out, the tomato paste should be added and cooked till it acquires a deep rust color and a sweet aroma. Other aromatics and spices like paprika can be added to the shells and cooked in the fat.

According to some of the recipes, flour can be added as part of the soup making process in order to make a Roux. The Roux can be added and stirred constantly after checking to see if more butter or oil is needed for 4 to 5 minutes. A Roux that is prepared can also be added to the shells and softened for a sufficient period.

Wine can be added and moistened with cooking liquid from the fish stock or shellfish, broth, fumet or shellfish velouté and then simmered for 30 minutes. Bouquet garni, herbs or spice sachet can be added.

The soup should be tasted and any adjustment or modification can be made to the consistency or seasoning during the cooking process. In order to maintain a perfect balance between solids and liquids more liquid can be added as the soup goes through the cooking procedure. The heat should be monitored and the soup should be stirred often. With starchy ingredients like other soups, Bisques can scorch easily even in a short time if not stirred constantly.

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With a cooking time of 1 hour, all the ingredients except the shells should be tender to a point that will facilitate easy pureeing. The soup should be skimmed through the cooking process.

Before pureeing the soup, the bouquet garni or spice sachet should be removed and discarded. The soup can be passed through a food mill or an immersion blender can be used to derive the most flavor into the soup and the residue can be discarded as the shells will not pass through the strainer.

The Bisque should be returned to simmer for a short while and necessary adjustments can be made with the consistency or seasoning before it is strained. The soup should be strained through a fine-mesh strainer.

With the Bisque ready to be finished now, it can be quickly cooled and refrigerated for use later.

The Bisque can be finished and garnished with necessary ingredients. The Bisque can be brought to medium heat and then simmered. The soup can be tasted and adjusted with seasoning. Take the cream in a separate pan and bring it to a simmer and add it gently to the Bisque. The cream that is added should be of sufficient amount and must not overpower the flavor of the main ingredient but should enrich and enhance a smooth texture and taste.

The quality of the finished Bisque must be evaluated. The flavor of the main ingredient should reflect in a bisque that is good. When cream is added, it should not overpower the flavor of the main ingredient. Bisques are known to be grainy and coarse with a consistency that is similar to heavy cream. A vegetable bisque is a paler in shade than the main ingredient, a crustacean Bisque would be red or pale pink and a shellfish Bisque would be ivory in color.

TIPS FOR MAKING THE PERFECT BISQUE

- Maximum flavors can be extracted from raw shells and heads.
- Crustacean stock that is flavorful can be made from the heads and shells of crustaceans such as crayfish, shrimps, crabs and lobsters. Sauces, soups and rice dishes when cooked can be enhanced with crustacean broth or stock. Tomatoes are normally used as a natural match when cooking crustacean stocks as the color and the flavor of the stock is enhanced.
- To add a delectable flavor, herbs such bouquet garni and especially Tarragon when chopped and added at the final stages of the cooking process enhances the flavor and is delicious.
- As a useful hint, the heads of shrimps, lobsters and crayfish can be ground in a food processor or crushed with the end of a rolling pin in order to infuse the flavor into the liquid. Crab shells and claw shells are thick and must not be ground in the food processor as the blades will be damaged. Most often, the heads of the shrimp are removed already, so the shells and the tails will have to be used. The shells can be frozen in a plastic bag till there is enough for a small pot of stock to be cooked.
- It is advisable to buy prawns with the heads attached.
- When tightly wrapped in a plastic wrap and stored in the freezer, crustacean shells can be kept frozen for 2 months and can be collected so that there is enough to cook a batch of stock or broth.
- Cream and butter can be used to derive or extract color and flavor from crustacean shells for rich sauces and soups.
- Crustacean stock has natural compatibility or an affinity with cognac, tomatoes, tarragon and saffron that can be used to enhance and flavor soups, rice dishes and sauces.
- Your fishmonger might carry lobster heads and bodies without the meat. They are cheaper than the whole lobsters and since we only need the heads and the shells, don’t hesitate to ask him.

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FISH SOUPS

There are many other fish and shellfish soups other than Bisque and chowder. Fish besides being tasty is also one of the most popular and healthiest foods that are used in the diet of the modern-day man. Being low in fat and high in protein and essential vitamins, it is advisable to use saltwater fish if you introducing fish into your diet. Saltwater fish possess the fresh taste of the sea and have firmer flesh.

A main course or a main meal can comprise of a hearty fish soup. Typical fish soups would be topped with clams or mussels and oily fish like mackerel or eel and will include a selection of any white fish such as haddock, cod, red snapper, hake, perch, bream, monkfish, gurnard or halibut. The more the variety the better, but the present trend for including shellfish that is expensive can be overpowering.

Tuscan Italian Fish Soup or 'Zuppa Di Pesce' as a contemporary favorite that comprises of five types of seafood originated from the fisherman's unsold leftover catch.

Innovative cooks around the globe on the coastal areas have utilized different types of small crabs with culinary skills. Even if the crabs are too small, they have a lot of flavor and can be used to cook broths with their taste and flavor. Addition of vegetables such as zucchini, tomato and potato with different types of spices and herbs are often added to enhance the taste.

As fish is naturally delicate in texture, many recipes for fish soups advice that it should be cooked carefully beginning with cooking the firmer side of the fish at the bottom of the pot. To enhance the taste, quickly cooked shellfish like clams, scallops, oysters or mussels can be cooked separately or poached and added to the soup with their juices.

Most often people find it troublesome to pick the flesh off the bones of a fish, but using fish that is filleted instead of pieces of fish with the bone is not appealing and will not hold the characteristics of a hearty fish soup. With a compromise, however, in making Bouillabaisse, the broth fish soup is made by cooking the heads and the bones first. In Provence, an entire fish is used for the soup along with other rock fish that are 4 to 5 inches long. The fish are well-rinsed and left uncut with their gut and other entrails intact. They are then cooked well and the soup is passed through a food mill with the soup being thickened with flesh of the fish. When the soup is cooked, whole big fish are poached in the fish soup and served with croutons, Rouille and Aoili cold sauces, grated gruyere and potatoes Anglaise cooked in the fish soup. This adds to the exclusive price tag besides being a unique dish.

Check the following rules before buying fish:

- The flesh should be moist, firm and pearly in appearance when buying white fish fillets.
- If the fish has an odor, do not buy it. Fresh fish should possess an ozone fragrance or the scent of sea breeze.
- The 'Sell by' and 'Use by' date should be checked. If the dates have expired, do not buy the fish.
- Bivalves, such as clams should be bought after checking the tag that specifies if they originated from safe waters. Stores are instructed to keep these tags for a period of 90 days.
- Check the fish to see that it has shining scales, red or pink or gills and shiny eyes.

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- If the fish has freezer burn or ice crystals do not buy the frozen fish.
- Look for leg movements when buying live crabs and lobsters.
- When tapped, live mollusks should open and close instantly. If they do not, discard them at once.
- Oysters and scallops when freshly shucked have a mild aroma of the sea.
- Oysters that are shucked should be in a clear liquid.

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RECIPES

MUSSEL SOUP OF ETRETAT

A delicious fish soup that is usually served from October to February, when the water of Étretat is at its coldest and the mussels have their best flavors.



Difficulty Level: Normal
Preparation time: 15
Cooking time: 30 minutes
Total time: 45 minutes
Servings: 6

Ingredients
2 lbs. fresh mussels
2 cups dry white wine
2 tbsp butter
2 garlic cloves, chopped
3 oz. Gruyère cheese
1 bunch of parsley, chopped
2 tomatoes, peeled
1 tsp of curry powder
1 cup of vermicelli
2 leeks, white part only
1 onion, sliced
1 carrot, sliced
4 cups fish stock

Preparation

Wash the mussels very well and remove the beards if any. Steam in a pot, with the wine, on high heat to open the mussels and cover with a lid. Cook the mussels for about 6 to 8 minutes, depending on their sizes.

When the mussels have opened, strain in a colander and reserve the cooking juice. Remove mussels from the shell and reserve in a cooler.

In a pot, melt the butter and sweat the leeks, garlic, onions, carrots and parsley on low heat. Cook the vegetables until slightly golden for about 10 minutes.

Add chopped and seeded tomatoes, mussel stock, fish stock, curry, pepper and bring to a boil.

Add vermicelli and simmer for 10 more minutes, then add mussels. Serve with grated cheese on the side.

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PRAWN BISQUE AND GOLDEN CROUTONS

This Bisque soup recipe is a fantastic flavorful dish. You may do the bisque with prawns shells, blue crab or lobster shells. After enjoying this soup, you will never throw away prawns shells.



Difficulty Level: Simple
Preparation Time: 20 Min
Cooking Time: 1 Hour 15 Min
Total Time: 1 Hour 50 Min
Servings: 6

Ingredients
1.5 lb prawns shells with heads
2 shallots, minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup Cognac
1/2 cup white wine
2 cups small Mirepoix - (1 carrot, ½ onions,1 celery stalk)
4 cloves garlic, crushed
6 parsley sprigs
3 bay leaves
1/2 cup tomato paste
2 quarts fish stock (8 cups)
Salt and white pepper to taste
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/2 cup cream
2 tablespoons minced chives
To thicken (beurre manié):
1/4 cup flour + 1/4 cup butter kneaded together
Garnish:
4 sandwich bread slices, cut into ¼ inch cubes (0.5 mm)

Preparation

Cook the bisque: In a casserole, heat the oil, add the Mirepoix, garlic, parsley, shallots, shells and bay leaves to the pan, and cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes. Add the cognac and ignite, let the alcohol burn. Add tomato paste, wine, fish stock, and simmer very slowly for 45 minutes.

Knead together the soft butter and flour to make a “beurre manié”. Place some of the hot liquid in a bowl, and beat in the butter and flour paste. Return this paste to the simmering ingredients and blend thoroughly. Simmer for another 15 minutes. Strain the bisque through a fine strainer, using the ladle to pound the solids, extract every last bit of liquid. Return to the pan, and bring to boil. Add cream and adjust seasoning and consistency.

Serve hot.

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LOBSTER BISQUE WITH TARRAGON AND COGNAC

Lobster bisque with tarragon and cognac is the soup for grand occasion; the recipe takes some time but releases an amazing taste, a true pleasure to share with loved ones.



Difficulty Level: Challenging
Preparation Time: 30 Min
Cooking Time: 1 Hour 15 Min
Total Time: 1Hour 45 minutes
Servings: 8

Ingredients
3 lbs raw lobsters body – shells - heads
3 shallots, minced
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup Cognac
1/2 cup white wine
1 branch of celery, sliced
1 carrot, sliced
1 onion, sliced
4 cloves garlic, crushed
6 parsley sprigs
10 sprigs of tarragon, chopped
4 bay leaves
1/2 cup tomato paste
2 quarts (8 cups) fish stock
Salt and white pepper to taste
1/2 cup cream
8 baguette slices, toasted
2 tablespoons minced chives
2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon
To thicken (beurre manié):
1/2 cup flour + 1/2 cup butter kneaded together

Preparation

Prepare the lobster if using whole ones: Stun the lobsters by cutting them through the head with a knife, at the center point just about a half-inch behind the eyes. Cut the lobsters as follows: each claw cut in half, arms split; body quartered; tail split in half. When cutting, place a pan underneath the cutting board, to collect the juices that run out of the lobster, which will be added to the vegetables during cooking.

Cook the lobster bisque: In a casserole, heat the oil, add the carrot, onion, celery, garlic, parsley, shells and bay leaves to the pan, and cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes. Add the Cognac and ignite, when the flame dies, add the white wine. Then add the remaining ingredients, and simmer very slowly for 45 minutes. Place some of the hot liquid in a bowl, and beat in the butter and flour paste. Return this paste to the simmering ingredients and blend thoroughly. Simmer for another 15 minutes.

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Finish the lobster bisque: Strain the bisque through a fine strainer, using the ladle to pound the solids, extract every last bit of liquid. Return to the pan, and bring to boil. Add the cream and adjust seasoning, serve the lobster bisque, very hot.

Chef’ s note: You may substitute the lobster shells, with any shell fish shells, including blue crab and prawn shells. The shellfish heads have the maximum flavors for the bisque so does not throw them out.

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NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER

A delicious Clam chowder recipe, creamy and thick, this recipe was a traditional recipe from a fisherman's family of New England.



Difficulty Level: Normal
Preparation Time: 30 Min
Cooking Time: 30 Min
Total Time: 1Hour
Servings: 8

Ingredients
1.5 lb clams (4 dozen small clams)
1 cup white wine
4 slices of bacon cut into small strips (4 oz.)
2 teaspoons butter
1 onion, chopped very fine
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 small carrot, cut into Brunoise
2-celery stalk, cut into Brunoise
4 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon cumin powder
1 teaspoon fennel powder
2 cups milk
4 cups fish stock
1-cup heavy cream
3 medium-size potatoes, diced
1 cup of corn in grain
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon chopped parsley

Preparation:

Open the clams: Wash clams thoroughly. Place them in a deep pan with the wine and cover with a lid. Cook on medium heat until the shells open. Strain the broth through cheesecloth or fine strainer and reserve. Remove the clams from their shells and chop into small pieces.

Cook the chowder: In a large saucepan, cook bacon in a teaspoon of butter for about 3 minutes but do not brown. Add chopped onion and garlic, and cook gently over low heat for about 2 minutes. Add second teaspoon of butter, carrot and celery Brunoise, and sweat on low heat. Add flour, cumin, fennel and mix well to combine. Cook the flour into the vegetables for a good minute on low heat, add slowly milk, fish stock and clams juice. Bring to a boil and add the potatoes and corn. Taste and rectify seasoning to taste. Cook until potatoes are tender, for about 20 minutes. Add clams and cream bring to a simmer and serve immediately.

Chef's note: Your Clam Chowder should be slightly thicker than a regular soup or sauce.

What is Brunoise? Brunoise is a method of food preparation in which the food item is first julienned and then turned 90° and diced, producing cubes of a side length of about 3 mm on each side or less.

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OYSTERS VELOUTE WITH PAPRIKA OIL

A delicious oyster's velouté recipe, creamy and delicate, the soup combines lovely flavors and delicate textures, a very nice winter soup.



Difficulty Level: Normal
Preparation Time: 30 Min
Cooking Time: 30 Min
Rest Time: Not specified
Total Time: 1Hour
Servings: 6

Ingredients for the soup:
2 ounces butter
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 cup diced carrots
1 cup chopped onions
1 cup diced celery heart
5 garlic cloves chopped
3 ounces flour
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons ground fennel
1 gram saffron
2 bay leaves
1 cup dry white wine
4 cups fish stock
1 lb fresh oysters without the shell
1 cup whipping cream (35% fat)
2 cups diced potatoes
Sea salt and white pepper to taste
Garnish:
6 tablespoons sour cream
6 dill sprigs

Preparation:

Make the soup: Warm up the vegetable oil and the butter in a saucepan on a low heat. Cook the onion, carrots, celery and garlic for five minutes. Stir frequently to avoid any color on the vegetables. Add the flour, cumin, fennel, saffron and bay leaves. Stir and deglaze with one cup of white wine. Gradually whisk in the fish stock. Simmer for 20 minutes on low to medium heat.

Using a blender, process half of the oysters and reserve the other half for garnish. Dice and reserve the remaining oysters in the refrigerator. Add the processed oysters to the soup and let it cook for 5 minutes. Add the cream, and the diced potatoes. Add salt and white pepper, according to taste.

Finish: When ready to serve, remove the bay leaves from the soup and add the raw diced oyster and cook for 2 minutes. Serve garnished with sour cream, dill and cold paprika oil.

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Note: If you like the consistency, you are done. For a thicker soup, add a little bit of cornstarch, dissolved in cold water to the boiling soup. It will thicken the soup. If it is too thick, add the reserved juice to make it thinner.

Oyster opening tips:

- Protect your hand by wearing heavy-duty rubber gloves or enclose oyster in several thickness of a folded kitchen towel.

- Hold the shell in the palm of your hand with the left valve, the deeper side, down. Locate the beak (the hinged part of the oyster--the narrow end), and with a back-and-forth motion gently work the tip of the oyster knife between the shell halves.

- Once the knife has penetrated the shell (by 1/4 inch or so) make sure the oyster is firmly impaled on the blade by giving the shell a few shakes. It should remain firmly stuck on the end of the knife.

- Working very carefully, twist the knife back and forth to open the shell.

- Once the shell is opened, slide the knife across the top of the shell to cut the adductor muscle and run the knife under the body of the oyster.

- Discard the top shell.

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ITALIAN FISH SOUP OR ZUPPA DI PESCE

For a country where almost every region has a coast, it is hardly surprising that Italy has almost as many versions of this fish soup as there are fish in the sea. This recipe includes suggestions for fish varieties, but check with your fishmonger what is the best on the day.



Difficulty Level: Normal
Preparation Time: 45 Min
Cooking Time: 60 Min
Total Time: 1Hour 45 minutes
Servings: 8

Ingredients for the soup:
Fish stock:
10 ounces firm white fish fillets, such as monkfish, red mullet or cod, skin removed, cut into large cubes, bones reserved.
1 small onion, roughly chopped
1 carrot, roughly chopped
1 /4 cup parsley
2 bay leaves
Garnish:
½ pound squid tubes
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
1 carrot, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
Pinch of cayenne pepper
12 shrimp
½ fennel bulb, trimmed and thinly sliced
2/3 cup dry white wine
14 ounces can chopped tomatoes
½ lb small scallops, cleaned
12 clams, live
12 mussels, live
Crostinis:
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
4 slices country style bread, such as Ciabatta

Preparation

To make the fish stock, rinse the fish bones in cold water, removing any blood or innards. Peel and devil the shrimp and put the fish bones and shrimp shells in a large saucepan with just enough water to cover. Bring slowly to simmer, skimming any froth from the surface. Add the onion, carrot, bay leaves and the parsley, let it simmer gently for 20 minutes. Strain through a fine colander and measure 6 cups of stock. If it is a little less than this, add a little water. If there is more than this, put the strained stock back into a clean saucepan and simmer until reduced to 6 cups.

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Lay the squid out flat, skin side up, and score a criss-cross pattern into the flesh, being careful not to cut all the way through. Slice diagonally into bite size strips.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and cook the onion, celery, fennel, carrot, garlic and roughly chopped parsley over medium heat for 5 to 6 minutes or until soft but not browned.

Add the cayenne pepper and season well. Add the white wine, increase the heat and cook until it has been absorbed. Stir in the tomatoes, then add the fish stock and bring to boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes.

Add the fish pieces and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the rest of the seafood and simmer for another 2 minutes. Taste and rectify the seasoning if necessary.

To make the crostini, heat the olive oil and crushed garlic in a large frying pan over moderately low heat. Add the slices of bread and fry on both sides until golden. Place a slice of bread into each of four warmed serving bowls. Ladle the soup on top and serve immediately.

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FISH SOUP OF MARSEILLE

This is the best and easy way to prepare your fish soup. Ask your fishmonger to clean and chop the fish heads for you. He must remove gills and eyes for you. This is the traditional fish soup recipe of French Mediterranean coasts. All the flavors of the Provencal coasts are bounds in the soup.



Difficulty Level: Medium
Preparation Time: 30 Min
Cooking Time: 2 hours and 10 minutes
Total Time: 2 hours and 40 minutes
Servings: 4 to 6

Ingredients for the soup:
2 tablespoons olive oil
3.5 lbs chopped snapper gills and eyes removed
1 cup dry white wine
1 orange, skin grated, peeled and quartered
4 cups small Mirepoix (carrot, onion, celery, fennel)
1 head garlic, split in half
1 tsp dried thyme
1 tsp dried rosemary
5 bay leaves
1 can (14 Fl oz) crushed tomato
½ can (2.2 Fl-oz) tomato paste
1 gram saffron crocus
¼ tsp chili powder
2 to 2.5 quarts or liters of cold water
¼ cup of Ricard or Pernod alcohol, optional
To garnish:
½ cup grated gruyere cheese
12 baguette slices, toasted
½ cup of Provencal rouille sauce, optional

Preparation:

To start: Wash the chopped fish heads under cold running water over and over, until the water stays clear. This should take about 20 minutes. In the meantime, prepare and dice all vegetables in quarter inch cubes. Strain fish heads in colander.

Cook the soup: Place a large stockpot on medium heat, add olive oil and fish heads. Cook slowly for 5 minutes. Add wine and cook for 5 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Add chopped vegetables, quartered orange and zest, thyme, rosemary, bay leaves, crushed tomato, tomato paste, saffron, salt, pepper, chili and water. Mixed well and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Simmer for about 2 hours on medium-low heat, stirring from time-to-time making sure that nothing sticks to the bottom.

Finish the soup: Pass fish soup through a vegetable mill, to extract maximum flavors and discard bones. Cool the soup and refrigerate overnight. Before boiling the soup again, discard excess fat on the top. When the soup is hot taste and rectify the seasoning if desired.

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Served with, toasted crouton, grated Gruyere and Provencal Rouille sauce if desired.

Where is Marseille? Although part of the region of Provence, Marseilles has a soul of its own. Founded in 600 b.c. by the Greek sailors of Phocaea, this great city is the oldest in France and surely the most complex.

Second largest city in France and the largest commercial port, Marseilles, in the time of the French colonies, was the gateway to the Mediterranean, Today Marseilles remains a capitol of southern Europe, cosmopolitan and exuberant, with its picturesque old port, its Bouillabaisse and its folklore.

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SAFFRON ROUILLE

Saffron rouille is thick cold sauce similar to aioli made of potato, chilies, garlic and olive oil. Traditionally served with bouillabaisse and fish soup. Certain recipes also call for saffron and tomatoes.



Difficulty Level: Easy
Preparation Time: 15 Min
Cooking Time: none
Total Time:15 minutes
Yield: 1 cup

Ingredients for the soup:
3 garlic cloves
1 fresh or dry red chili pepper
1/2 gram or 1 big pinch saffron
1/2 Russet cooked potato, peeled
1/2 cup fish soup, reduced to 1/4 cup and cool
1/2 cup olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Preparation:

To prepare the Rouille, in a food processor, combine first four ingredients. Season with salt and pepper. Add the oil slowly through the fennel as the machine is running. Then add the cold reduced fish soup.

Serve with fish soup of Marseille or Bouillabaisse.

Chef Note: The key for success in this recipe is to respect the quantity and to include the cold reduced fish soup.

Safety note: Wear disposable gloves when handling the chili, to avoid spicy burns if your hands get in contact with sensitive part of your body.

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