
Recipe Packet: Kick-start Your Cooking Skills

Week ONE: Soups and Sauces

New England Clam Chowder

Serves 6-8

- 3 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice, or 24 ounces fish fumet
- 1 pound russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter
- 3 slices bacon, finely chopped
- 2 cups chopped onions
- 1 1/4 cups chopped celery (about 2 large stalks)
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- 6 (6 1/2-ounce) cans chopped clams, drained, juices reserved
- 1 1/4 cups half and half
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco sauce

Bring bottled clam juice and potatoes to boil in heavy large saucepan over high heat.

Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat.

In heavy large pot, melt butter over medium heat. Add bacon and cook until bacon begins to brown, about 8 minutes. Add onions, celery, garlic and bay leaf. Sauté until vegetables soften, about 6 minutes. Stir in flour and cook 2 minutes (do not allow flour to brown). Gradually whisk in reserved juices from clams. Add potato mixture, clams, half and half, and Tabasco sauce.

Simmer chowder 10 minutes to blend flavors, stirring frequently. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

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Minestrone

Serves Six

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 yellow onion, small diced
2 stalks celery, chopped
2 carrots, peeled and cut into half moons
½ yellow bell pepper, small diced
1 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
One 15 ounce can Muir Glen Fire Roasted diced tomatoes
4 cups vegetable, chicken or beef stock
1 piece of rind from Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (optional)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon basil chiffonade
½ tablespoon minced flat-leaf parsley
1 cup shredded Savoy cabbage, washed and spun dry
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar if needed
Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (optional)

Heat olive oil in a heavy-bottomed stockpot over medium heat. Add the garlic and onion and cook for 4 minutes or until translucent. Add the celery, carrots, bell pepper, tomatoes, chickpeas, stock, and cheese rind if using and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer, and cook for 10 minutes.

Right before serving, stir in the basil, parsley, and cabbage and heat until they soften and turn vibrant green and are cooked through. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt, pepper and balsamic vinegar. Ladle soup into bowls and sprinkle with Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

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Béchamel Sauce

Makes approximately 2 cups

½ yellow or white onion, coarsely chopped
3 tablespoon unsalted butter
¼ cup all-purpose flour
3 cups whole milk
1 bay leaf
3 whole cloves
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
white pepper to taste

In a medium-sized saucepan over low flame, sweat the onion and butter until the onion is soft and translucent, about 7 minutes. Stir in the flour and cook about 3 minutes. Add the milk in a steady stream whisking vigorously until the milk is fully incorporated with no lumps. Add the bay leaf and cloves, season with the salt and white pepper and simmer the sauce for 12 to 15 minutes until the raw flour taste has been cooked out. Strain the sauce through a fine sieve into a bowl.

To make a Cheddar Cheese sauce, stir in 2 cups of shredded sharp cheddar cheese until smooth.

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Aioli

Yields 1 cup

We recommend a mellow extra-virgin olive oil or a combination of oils for best flavor. Save your peppery Tuscan-style olive oils for another use as they tend to overwhelm aioli.

(All ingredients should be at room temperature)

1 large egg yolk

1 teaspoon sherry or white balsamic vinegar

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 cup extra-virgin olive oil (or a mix of ½ cup pure olive oil or peanut oil with a 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil for a lighter aioli)

1 teaspoon garlic paste

Juice of a half lemon

In a small bowl, beat the egg yolk with vinegar and a pinch of salt and pepper until combined.

Add the oil to the beaten egg yolk, drop by drop, whisking constantly for about the first 2 tablespoons of oil until the mixture begins to thicken. As the aioli begins to thicken, the oil can be poured a little faster in a thin steady stream. If the mixture becomes too thick to whisk, add a little of the lemon juice or water to thin it out and continue to whisk and incorporate oil. Stir in the lemon juice and garlic paste to suit your taste (you may not need all of it.)

Cook's Notes: Aioli can be stored for up to 3 days in the fridge but is better made and served the same day. If you plan to serve aioli on a buffet or at a picnic place your bowl of aioli in a bowl of ice to keep it cool and safe.