

Recipe of The Month- August 2015



Bouillabaisse



It's a well-known fact that the Italians taught the French how to cook. I do have a particular bias regarding this, but that's really not the point! It is true that over many hundreds of years, with much practice, the French have perfected certain techniques and methods and have made them their own. Bouillabaisse is a perfect example of this. I think of Bouillabaisse as a more refined version of Caicucco, or Cioppino: the Italian version of Fishermen's stew created in San Francisco. Recently my Mom dropped by the office with a sandwich from Manresa Bread, which is outstanding if you don't already know that, and a recipe book from Life and Thyme. In glancing through the book I came across a recipe for Bouillabaisse and I thought it would be perfect to share as our recipe this month. I really enjoy this kind of dish: lovely seafood in a hearty yet sophisticated broth. One of the things that makes this a decidedly French dish is the sophistication of the broth - the addition of saffron creating an elegant taste that compliments the seafood perfectly. At first glance, this recipe may look complicated, but it isn't! As long as you follow the basic steps, you're not going to mess this up. In addition, you can substitute any seafood you like, use clams instead of mussels, add crab, use halibut instead of Rockfish etc. The thing to keep in mind is that you want to use seafood that won't fall apart, firm fish and not delicate is the rule of thumb. Make sure that you have some big pieces of French bread, or better yet, garlic bread to go along with this dish. Serve this piping hot with a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio along with the bread. This is a perfect dish for a cold autumn night or to share with all of your friends at an afternoon meal on Sunday. Here's to family, friends and food. Buona Vita!

For the Broth

1 1/2 to 2 lbs size rockfish (cut into sections)

12 oz Minkfish fillet (cut into sections)
12 oz John Dory fillet (cut into sections)
1lb black mussels (beard removed)
1/8 cup extra virgin olive oil
4 garlic cloves (left in skin)
1 1/2 onion (cut into thin slices)
2 leeks (white portion only, cut into thin slices)
2 each carrots (peeled and cut into thin slices)
4 celery stems (cut into thin slices)
1 fennel bulb (cut into thin slices)
2 tbs tomato paste
2 cups white wine
1 bay leaf
2 sprigs of thyme
4 sprigs parsley
15 black peppercorns
3 tbs saffron threads
4 roma tomatoes (peeled, deseeded and largely diced)
3 qts water
1 lb PeeWee potatoes
1/8 cup parsley leaves
sea salt to taste

Making the Bouillabaisse broth

Place rockfish pieces into a bowl. Sprinkle with 1 tbsp saffron and 3 tbsp olive oil. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours to marinate. Heat a large sauté pan over high heat and add marinated rockfish pieces. Brown until golden and reserve. Pour remaining olive oil into a large pot and heat over medium. Add garlic, onions, leeks, carrots, celery and fennel and sweat for about 5 minutes (stirring constantly to avoid browning). Add tomato paste and cook for another 2 minutes. Combine bay leaf, thyme, parsley and black peppercorns in a cheesecloth, wrapper and tied into a sachet. Add the white wine, sachet, and remaining saffron and bring to a boil. Simmer the wine and reduce by half. Add diced tomatoes, browned rockfish pieces and water and bring to a low simmer. Add mussels, cover the pot with a lid and cook over a low simmer for about 3-5 minutes, or until all the mussels are open. Remove mussels from the pot once they are open and reserve. Continue cooking broth for about 30 minutes. Using a large ladle, transfer the contents of the pot into a food mill or ricer and process into a clean pot. Bring the thick liquid back up to a low simmer and strain through cheesecloth. Season with sea salt and immediately chill over bowl of ice. Pour the Bouillabaisse broth into a large pot with the Peewee potatoes and place over high heat. Once the broth has come to a boil, reduce heat to a low simmer and cook the potatoes until tender. Season the monkfish and John Dory portions with sea salt and place in the broth. Cook the fish for 5-7 minutes or until they are cooked to your likeness. Remove the fish and potatoes from broth and reserve warm.

Divide the cooked fish, mussels and potatoes onto 6 serving bowls. Pour the Bouillabaisse into each bowl and sprinkle with snipped parsley.

Enjoy!

Chris and The GWMG Team