

gourmet recipes



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GOURMET RECIPES

Good-Looking Mussels

You know how much we love mussels, so figure the delight when we first opened *The Great Mussel and Clam Cookbook*, a collection of terrific recipes and photographs from Australia. It's a great read, starting with a fascinating history and description of mussels, plus some pertinent nutritional information.

For instance, we had no idea that European mussels have been cultured since the thirteenth century, and today a number of species of mussels are farmed globally, the most common of which is the blue mussel. The authors give us some technical pictures and statistics, such as that the growth rate of mussels on long lines will vary according to density, depth and food availability, and commercial harvest usually occurs after 1 to 2 years. There's more, but we suspect, like us, that your thoughts have drifted towards consumption!

But wait: you need to know that the versatile mussel has less fat and cholesterol, and more calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and iron than the average T-bone steak (ouce for ounce), plus a load of important Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids. If that isn't enough, the Aussie authors go on to say that the mussel's neat, symmetrical shell and delectable taste embellish a dinner party with an upmarket ambiance. Now there's a turn of phrase... mussels simply look good and taste great.

We agree! Guess what we're having for dinner tonight.

On today's menu:

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- I Mussels Marinières
- I Pernod Baked Mussels
- I Blue Cheese Mussels
- I Maltese Mussels

Mussels Marinières

The classic method for mussels, it's the recipe that we use most often. If you're new to cooking mussels, start with marinières; it will give you the confidence to try all the rest! The bonus here is that this is the first step for the Pernod Baked Mussels recipe, which we've included. As Bogart so famously stated, "This is the start of a beautiful friendship!"

Serves 3-4

| 1 kg mussels, cleaned
| 1 small onion, sliced
| 1 stick of celery, sliced
| 1 clove garlic, chopped
| 55 mL water or white wine
| Pepper
| 1 Tbsp. butter
| 1 Tbsp. parsley, chopped

1. Place the mussels, onion, celery, garlic and wine in a large
2. Cook over medium heat until the mussels have opened. Stir frequently to ensure the mussels cook evenly.
3. Add pepper to taste. Stir in the butter and parsley just before serving.

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...
A medium-bodied, unoaked, dry white wine – Muscadet, Soave, Chablis, Aligoté, dry Riesling.

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Pernod Baked Mussels

Pernod is one of those sophisticated, anise-flavoured liquors that can be used so very effectively – if sparingly – in recipes. Trust us, it really works, especially here. Once you've mastered cooking basic mussels marinières (which you'll do in 3 minutes!), you'll want to move on, and this recipe is a fine next step!

| 285 mL mussel cooking broth or fish stock, strained
| 1 onion, chopped
| 1 clove garlic, chopped
| 55 mL white wine
| 85 mL heavy cream
| 30 mL Pernod
| Juice of ½ lemon
| Salt and pepper
| 1 kg/2¼ lbs. mussels cleaned, cooked marinières style and divided into half shells

1. Place the broth, onion, garlic and white wine in a pot and cook over high heat, until reduced to a quarter.
2. Add the cream and reduce again to half.
3. Add the Pernod, lemon juice, salt and pepper.
4. Cover the mussels with the sauce.
5. Heat under the grill for 2 minutes and serve.

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...
A more substantial dry white wine with oak ageing – Ontario Chardonnay, white Burgundy, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.

Blue Cheese Mussels

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What a wonderful unexpected combination: briny sweet mussels and tangy blue cheese. Toss in some fresh spinach for colour, and you've got a combination that will wow the most jaded palate! This is a great starter dish for any meal... how about following with that T-bone steak!

Serves 3-4

| 2 Tbsp. olive oil
| 1 onion, chopped
| 1 stick celery, sliced
| ½ stick of leek, sliced
| 1 kg/2¼ lbs. mussels, cleaned
| 100 mL white wine
| 2 oz. blue cheese broken into small pieces
| 1 handful of fresh spinach leaves
| Juice of 1 lemon
| 1 oz. butter
| 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley

1. Place the oil, onion, celery and leek in a pot and cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently.
2. Add the mussels, white wine, blue cheese spinach, lemon juice and cook until the mussels have opened.
3. Add the butter and parsley, stir and serve.

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...

A medium-bodied white with good acidity and a touch of sweetness – Riesling Kabinett, Viognier, Oregon or Alsace Pinot Gris.

Maltese Mussels

We both love fennel, and found this combination unusual and delicious. It's a rich and hearty dish, a perfect lunch or Sunday night supper with good friends. Serve with a crisp salad and warm, crusty, wood-fired bread.

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Serves 6

| 100 mL olive oil
| 1 onion, diced
| 3 garlic cloves, chopped
| 2 roasted peppers, peeled and diced
| ½ bulb fennel, diced
| ½ celery stick, diced
| 145 mL white wine
| 1 juice of one orange plus grated zest
| 200 mL tomato juice
| 2 cups chicken stock
| Salt and pepper
| Cayenne pepper and paprika
| 1 lb. black mussels, cleaned

1. In a large pot on medium heat, add the oil, onion, garlic, pepper,

fennel and celery. Cook for 10 minutes.

2. Add the white wine, orange juice, zest, tomato juice, chicken stock, seasoning and cook for 20 minutes.

3. Add the mussels and cook until all the mussels have opened, about 8-10 minutes.

4. Serve immediately.

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...

A medium-bodied dry white wine – Pouilly-Fuissé, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, Sancerre, Ontario unoaked Chardonnay.

We wish to thank Whitecap Books for permission to publish recipes and photographs from The Great Mussel and Clam Cookbook. Recipe development by Ellen Argyriou and Olivier Massart, Photography by Warren Webb. Publisher and ©Richard Carroll, R&R Publications Marketing Pty. Ltd., Victoria, Australia.

Happily tested by Helen Hatton and Ron Morris.

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