

Dan Ralston's Kitchen

Cioppino

Serves 6 - 10

This is my version of the famous bay area fish stew. It was probably developed by the Italian immigrants who manned the fishing fleets of San Francisco. It is another easy entertaining dish because you can make the base a day or two ahead of time; just reheat and toss in the seafood just before serving. You will find this to be an easy recipe despite of the long list of ingredients.

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, finely diced

2 tablespoons minced garlic

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1/4 cup tomato paste

1 cup dry white wine

1 28 oz. can whole tomatoes with juice, crushed by hand

1 red bell pepper, trimmed, seeded, and finely diced

1 small fennel (or 1/2 large) finely diced

2 tablespoons minced flat-leaf parsley leaves

1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme leaves

1 bay leaf

3 cups fish stock or 2 bottles clam broth mixed with 32 ounces chicken stock

12 little neck clams

1 cooked Dungeness crab, cleaned and chopped into large pieces, (your fishmonger will clean it for you.) or 2 Alaskan king crab claws, cracked and quartered

12 mussels, scrubbed and beards removed

1 pound large shrimp, shelled and deveined

1/2 pound cleaned squid, cut into rings, and tentacles halved

1/2 pound sea scallops, trimmed, or firm fleshed fish, like halibut, (or both) cut into 1-inch cubes

1 cup finely chopped Italian parsley and basil for serving (optional)

Make the stew base. Heat a large Dutch oven over medium heat with the olive oil. Add the onions and saute until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, season with salt and pepper to taste, and cook 2 minutes more. Add the red pepper and fennel and cook, stirring, until soft, 3 or 4 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add the wine and Simmer the wine until reduced by about half. Add the tomatoes, peppers, parsley, thyme, and bay leaf and cook for 5 minutes. Add the stock or broths; bring to a boil, then adjust the heat to a real slow simmer. Cook the broth, with a cover slightly ajar, for an hour. Remember to taste throughout the cooking and adjust to taste. You may want to add a pinch or two of sugar or more salt and pepper.

Bring the broth to a simmer. Add the clams, and cook covered, over high heat, until the clams open. Add the crab and cook for 1 minute. Add the mussels, shrimp, squid, and scallops. Cook, stirring frequently, until the mussels open, the shrimp curl, and squid and scallops are just firm, about 3 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley and basil. Serve in large heated bowls with plenty of crusty bread.

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