

The World

Oregon clam chowder

Two versions of this chowder

SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 12:00 AM • [BY BILL LACKNER](#)

Local shellfish expert Bill Lackner has sent us a unique recipe for Oregon Clam Chowder. Here it is:

Oregon's clams specifically the use of gaper clams or razor clams distinguishes Oregon's Clam Chowder from other well known styles of clam chowders. Oregon's Clam Chowder is based on the uniquely delicate flavor of gaper clams or razor clams. The blend of the quahog or cherry stone clams plus the other ingredients of the traditional New England or Manhattan clam chowders cannot compare to the delicate flavor of the gaper clams or razor clams that make our clam chowder uniquely Oregon's Clam Chowder. I hope your family and friends enjoy Oregon's Clam Chowder as much as my family and friends have.

Each spring my wife and I debate how to cook the first limits of razor clams we have dug. She loves crème based Oregon's Clam Chowder as much as I love fried razor clams. I prepare the clam chowder using two limits of razor clams but it works just as well with one limit or a limit of bay clams (gaper, Martha Washington, cockles or softshell clams). I prefer the delicate flavor of gaper clams for my clam chowder.

Oregon's Clam Chowder

Once the clams are cleaned and washed, store the clams in sealed plastic bags or in covered bowls for immediate use or vacuum pack the clams and freeze them for future use. Reserve any clam juice that weeps into the plastic bags or in the covered bowl until needed. Prepare the clams for cooking by cutting the clam necks into small 3/4-inch bite sized pieces and refrigerate until needed. The essence of the flavor that makes Oregon's Clam Chowder unique is contained in the clam bodies and digger feet. Puree the clam bodies and digger feet and refrigerate until needed.

Peel and dice a large white onion into medium pieces and set aside in a large skillet until needed. Peel the skin from 2 large cloves of garlic. Crush the garlic into the large skillet using a garlic press. Sauté the onions and garlic in the large skillet with three heaping tablespoons of bacon fat or the fat rendered from finely chopped chunks of salt pork or from 1/2 stick of butter until the onions are nearly cooked through. I prefer bacon fat because it is readily available in our home. Remove the onions and garlic from the skillet and set aside until they are needed while retaining as much of the bacon fat in the

skillet as possible. Peel 8 medium or 6 large white rose potatoes. White rose potatoes are more flavorful than other potatoes. Quarter the potatoes and cut into medium bite size pieces. Put the potatoes into a 16-quart stock pot and add the entire contents from a 46-ounce can of no clams added clam juice with 1/2 teaspoon of salt. The large cans of clam juice can be purchased at wholesale grocery chain stores. Par-boil the potatoes until they are nearly cooked through. Pour the potatoes and the clam juice into a colander reserving the clam juice in a bowl until needed. Return the potatoes to the stock pot and add the onions. The potatoes and onion were cut into medium pieces because each batch of razor clam chowder lasts several days and every time the chowder is heated the potatoes and onions cook down into the chowder.

Using the large skillet containing the bacon fat make a roux by melting 1 1/2 quarter pound sticks of salted butter combined with 1 1/2 cups of flour. Heat the butter and bacon fat over a medium heat and stir in the flour until the mixture thickens forming a paste. Add more flour or butter if needed. Increase to high heat while slowly adding a quart of half & half, thinning the roux. Stir constantly until the roux thickens; then gradually add the clam juice to the roux until the entire mixture thickens and begins to boil.

Combine the roux with the onions and potatoes in the stock pot. Stir constantly with a wire whisk or large spoon to prevent the chowder from burning until the mixture of roux, potatoes and onions returns to a boil. Add the chopped clams and the pureed clam feet and bodies to the stock pot then remove the pot from the burner. Fold the chopped and pureed clams in the chowder mix with a large spoon. Allow the clam chowder to stand for 15 minutes before serving. My wife and I salt and pepper to taste. She prefers black pepper and I prefer white. I prefer croutons in my chowder and she prefers Oyster crackers.

Tomato-based version of Oregon's Clam Chowder

The unique flavor of gaper clams or razor clams is ideally suited for the complex flavors of tomato based Oregon's Clam Chowder. Do not overpower the delicate flavor of the clam by using more tomatoes than the recipe calls for.

Once the clams are cleaned and washed store the clams in sealed plastic bags or in covered bowls for immediate use or vacuum pack the clams and freeze them for future use. Reserve any clam juice that weeps into the plastic bags or in the covered bowl until needed. Prepare the clams for cooking by cutting the clam necks into small 3/4-inch bite sized pieces and refrigerate until needed. The essence of the flavor that makes Oregon's Clam Chowder unique is contained in the clam bodies and digger feet. Puree the clam bodies and digger feet and refrigerate until needed.

Peel and dice a large white onion into medium pieces and set aside in a large skillet. Peel the skin from 2 large cloves of garlic. Crush the garlic into the large skillet using a garlic press. Sauté the onions and garlic in the large skillet with three heaping tablespoons of bacon fat or the fat rendered from finely chopped chunks of salt pork or

from 1/2 stick of butter until the onions are nearly cooked though. I prefer bacon fat because it is readily available in our home. Peel 8 medium or 6 large white rose potatoes. White Rose potatoes are more flavorful than other potatoes. Quarter the potatoes and cut into medium bite size pieces and set aside in the stock pot. Peel and chop 1 medium sized turnip into bite sized pieces and combine with the potatoes in the stock pot. Add the entire contents from a 46-ounce can of no clams added clam juice with the clam juice from the clams that was set aside earlier to the stock pot. Open and drain the juice from a 28 ounce can of whole tomatoes into the stock pot. Crush the tomatoes with your hands and add them to the stock pot. Add 2 bay leaves. Add 1 teaspoon of dried thyme. Add 1 1/2 teaspoons of dried oregano. Grind and add the meat from 1/2 of a nut of nutmeg. Par-boil the potatoes until they are nearly cooked through. While the potatoes are cooking wash and cut 6 stalks of celery into medium bite sized pieces and set aside. Wash and cut 3 small round sized carrots into small bite sized pieces and set aside. Sauté the carrots and celery in the large skillet with the remaining bacon fat until tender. Add the onions, carrots and celery to the stock pot and cook until firm but tender. Add the pureed clam meat and the bite sized pieces of the clam's neck. Remove the stock pot from the burner and set aside for 15 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste before garnishing with fresh chopped Italian flat leafed parsley. Serve with crusty French or Italian baguettes and a bottle of fine white wine.