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easy & delicious recipes

Buttery Mussels in Wine

Introduction:

Rich, decadent, simple, peasant food all in one and what a mouthful! In South Africa we have the mussel season from October to end April.

Ingredients

1 kg live mussels (about 40 mature ones)
125 ml salted butter, cut into pieces
125 ml shallots, finely chopped (from Woollies)
20 ml garlic, finely chopped
250 ml dry white wine
generous pinch sea salt
80 ml mixture of chopped Italian parsley, chervil and chives

Method

Soak the mussels for at least an hour in a bucket of fresh cold water to which you've added a cup of oats or maize meal so that they can spit out their dirt. Drain, rinse well and discard the ones that are open; they are dead. Now remove the mussel beards and scrape off any sandy and stony bits from the shells. Rinse well and drain.

Melt a good knob of the butter in a large heavy-bottomed pan and add the shallots. Cook until soft but not browned. Add the garlic and stir briefly then add the wine. Bring to a boil then add the mussels. Cover and cook until the mussels have just opened, about 5 minutes, shaking the pan a few times.

Drain but reserve the stock. Return the stock to the pan and cook rapidly for a few minutes until reduced a bit to your liking. Then start to add the butter, a few pieces at a time, stirring. When all the butter is in and melted, add the herbs and return the mussels to the pan. Cover and give the pan a good shake and transfer your buttery, briny, winy mussels to a large serving bowl. Discard the ones that did not open.

Serve immediately, passing around a basket of crusty bread, more butter, more wine and a few small baskets or bowls for the shells. And offer small, damp hand towels kept just for this purpose: to eat with your hands.

Serves 2

Chef's hint:

This is a most economical dish if you picked the mussels yourself. Just remember the season, to pick nice large ones, your daily limit and your license.