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Chow Bella's Clambake Recipe



Clambake Photo Susie Iventosch

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(Serves 4)

The traditional method for throwing a clambake is to start by digging a hole in the ground. Cover the bottom of the hole with large stones and build a large, hot fire on top of the stones. This fire needs to burn for a couple of hours to heat those stones as hot as they can get. In the meantime you can prepare the food. A clambake consists of a lot of food, most importantly fresh clams. Typically the menu will include (but may also include regional or seasonal substitutions):

4 fresh ears of corn, shucked

1 pound smoked sausage, cut into 4 pieces

12 very small (one-inch in diameter) new potatoes, cut in half

8 small to medium onions, peeled, and cut in half

4 (13/4-pound) lobsters

24 little neck clams, scrubbed

For serving: 1 cup unsalted butter, melted

2 lemons, cut into wedges

Serve with clam chowder

You will also need enough seaweed or rock weed to cover the fire pit and plenty of cheesecloth. Wire baskets are also helpful to hold everything together. Wrap individual servings of the above ingredients in cheesecloth, tying the corners together and place in baskets if you have them.

Once the rocks are hot enough to spit a drop of water back at you, rake off the coals from the fire and cover the rocks with seaweed. Place the food packets on the on the seaweed and cover with more seaweed. It's then best to cover the whole project with a large tarpaulin. After about 2 hours everything should be done. Serve with lemon and melted butter.

That's how you hold a traditional clambake. Since most of us don't live on a beach or want to dig a hole in our backyard this meal can be made on the grill or in a large pot.

How would you do this in the pot? Arrange corn, sausage, potatoes, and onions in a steamer basket over boiling water in a Dutch oven. Top with lobsters and clams. Cover and steam 20 minutes. Serve with butter and lemon.

How would you do this on a charcoal grill? Lay out two pieces of foil with two pieces of the cheesecloth on top. Wrap this around 1 corn, 1 piece of sausage, 6 potatoes, 2 small onions, 1 lobster, 6 little neck clams, and some seaweed or rockweed -- if you were able to find it -- add a cup of water to the package. Make sure to tie the cloth over the food and seal the foil well.

Make 4 of these packages and place them on a barbecue grill about 4 inches from the heat. Cover the grill with the hood or with large pieces of foil tucked in around the edges of the grill.

Let the packages steam for 1 hour flipping them every 15 minutes. If the potatoes are done, it's a good indication that the lobster and the rest of the ingredients are ready too. (Note, my packets cooked in about 30 minutes, so the cooking time will vary with each barbecue. It's best to take one of the packets to test from time to

time to see if the potatoes are cooked.)

The recommended dessert for a Clambake is a Whoopie Pie. Whoopie pies are considered a New England phenomenon and a Pennsylvania tradition. They're one of Maine's best known and most loved comfort foods. They accompany most New England clambakes but are not a staple of Chow Bella.

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