

Clam Chowder

<http://butcherblockco.com/blog/fall-soup-clam-chowder/>

Recipe Courtesy of Claire Hoenke

- 1 to 1 ½ pound canned or frozen baby clams, juices reserved
- 2 8oz bottles clam juice
- 2 or 3 bacon slices, minced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves, chopped
- 1 pound potatoes, peeled, diced
- 3 cups heavy cream
- 6 tablespoons dry sherry, or to taste
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Hot sauce (such as Tabasco), to taste
- Worcestershire sauce, to taste
- Optional loaf of bread or soup crackers

Drain and reserve the juices from the clams. In my case, I did have one 10 oz. can of clams, but that's not really enough, so I also pulled a bag of Trader Joes cooked frozen langostino tails out of my freezer and let them thaw in the sink for a few minutes. Really, any seafood will do in a pinch. Add the bottled clam juice together with the drained juices, and it should equal at least 3 cups. Mince the clams and set them aside for now.

Chop up the raw bacon and throw it into a 6 or 8 quart soup pot set over medium heat. Let the bacon bits render slowly, for about 8 minutes until they are almost crispy. While the bacon is cooking, chop up the onion. When the bacon is ready, add the onion and cook it, stirring occasionally, until it is translucent. Add in the flour and turn the heat down to low, stirring with a wooden spoon for about 2 minutes. Then, slowly add in the clam juice. Use your spoon or a whisk to get all the crispy bits up off the bottom of the pan, and then cook the juice at a simmer, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. While the juices simmer and thicken, peel and dice your potatoes. I like my soup to be super chunky, so I use 4 medium to large sized Yukon golds.

When the clam juice is about the thickness of heavy cream, add the potatoes to your pot, along with the chopped thyme and the bay leaf. Cook the potatoes until they are tender, which should be about 15 minutes, depending on the size of your dice.

Meanwhile, in a separate saucepan, combine the cream with the minced clams and simmer them together for about 5 minutes to cook the clams. If you have bread to go with the soup, this is the time to put it into the oven to warm up in time for dinner. If you are using any pre-cooked seafood items, chop them to bite size and add them to the soup pot in the last minute or so of the clams' cooking time. When the potatoes are tender and the clams are cooked, add the cream mixture to the soup pot and simmer for 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the sherry, and season to taste with Worcestershire, salt and pepper, and a good couple of shakes of your favorite hot sauce. Take the bread out of the oven and get ready to feast.