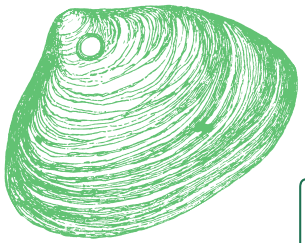
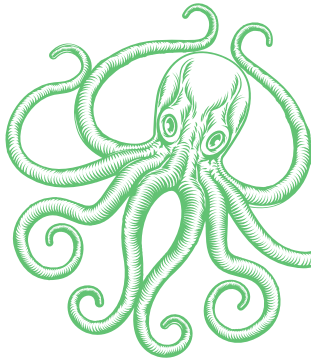
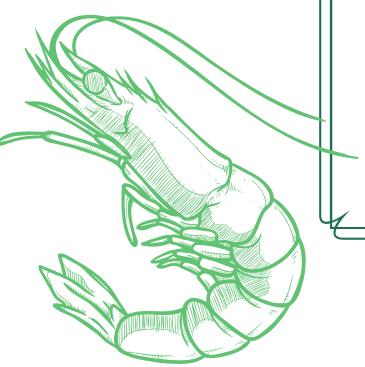




The Feast of the Seven Fishes

Christmas Eve Tradition

The Feast of the Seven Fishes, known as "La Virgilia" or The Vigil, in an Italian-American Christmas Eve Tradition. It originated in Southern Italy as a way to observe abstinence from meat until the midnight birth of baby Jesus. Until then, there could be no use of animal products or fats, which is a Roman Catholic tradition. It was brought to America in the late 1800s by Southern Italian Immigrants in New York City. The surrounding area is where this tradition continues today. Families have 7, 9, 13, or any number of seafood dishes they desire, There is little evidence of Italians or Italian Americans limiting themselves to 7 dishes. Now families enjoy a wide variety of seafood dishes on Christmas Eve, even two hundred years after it was brought to America.



Facts from Wikipedia Page:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feast_of_the_Seven_Fishes

BACCALA AND OCTOPUS SALAD

From Matt Pescatore

INGREDIENTS

- Dried cod (baccala)
- 4-5 pounds of octopus
- 1/4 cup of finely minced garlic
- parsley
- 1/4 olive oil
- 1-2 lemons
- 1-2 cups of chopped celery
- 7-8 cherry vinegar peppers

PROCEDURE

1. Soak the dried cod in a large bowl of cold water in the refrigerator for 3 days changing the water twice a day
2. On the third day, boil the baccala for about 20 minutes till it starts flaking. Boil the octopus in a separate pan for about 45 minutes
3. Using your hands, break up the baccala into smaller pieces and put into a large mixing bowl
4. Clean the octopus once it is done cooking, cut it up and add to the bowl with the baccala
5. Chop up a bunch of parsley and add to the bowl
6. Add salt, pepper, vinegar peppers, freshly squeezed lemon juice, celery, and olive oil
7. Mix well and refrigerate (overnight is better since it will marinate). Mix about every 4 hours
8. Serve cold.

CLAM CHOWDER

From Matt Pescatore

INGREDIENTS

- 7-8 pounds of cherrystones
- 1 quart of light cream
- 2-3 tablespoons of flour
- 1/2 lb of bacon
- 4-5 potatoes
- Black pepper
- 1/ stick of butter

PROCEDURE

1. In a large pan, add cherrystones, then add about 1 inch of water (after you put in the cherrystone). *This helps steam them*
2. As they open up, remove from pan then remove clam from shell
3. After they all open up, slowly pour the juice from the clams into another bowl keeping the sand from the clams at the bottom of the pan
4. Chop the clams
5. Chop the bacon finely and brown in another pan with the butter
6. Once the bacon is browned, add clams, potatoes, and juice from the clams
7. Boil till potatoes are cooked then add black pepper
8. Heat slowly till it starts simmering then serve

FRIED SHRIMP, SMELTS, BACCALA & CALAMARI

From Matt Pescatore

INGREDIENTS

- Shrimp
- Smelts
- Baccala
- Calamari
- Frying batter - flour or regular flour
- Vegetable, corn or canola oil
- Salt

PROCEDURE

1. In a frying pan, add about 1 inch of oil and heat till around 300 degrees
2. In a mixing bowl, add flour and water until it comes to a relatively thick consistency
3. In another mixing bowl, add a good amount of the dry frying batter or flour
4. Dip the fish into the wet batter then in the dry batter and put aside in a pan
5. Once all the fishes are battered, fry till golden brown (both sides)
6. Place on a pan lined with paper towels or a drip rack for the excess oil to drip off
7. Put in a bowl then sprinkle with salt and serve

LINGUINE AND CLAMS

From Matt Pescatore

INGREDIENTS

- 6-7 pounds of little neck clams
- Olive oil
- 3/4-1 cup of Garlic
- Cup of Parsley
- 1 or 2 pounds of Shrimp (optional)
- 2 cups of Kitchen ready crushed tomato sauce. (optional, if you want a red sauce)
- Linguini

PROCEDURE

1. In a large pan, add clams and about 1 inch of water and place on stovetop with high heat
2. As the water boils they will open, remove them from the pan then remove the clam from the shell
3. Once they all open up, slowly transfer the juice to another pan keeping any sand from the clams at the bottom of the pan preventing it from going it into the second pan
4. In another pan, heat up about 3/4 inch of olive oil
5. Sauté the garlic till it starts to brown up and add the clams, the juice from the clams, parsley, and tomato sauce (optional) and bring to a boil
6. In the meantime, boil a pan of water and cook the linguini
7. If you add shrimp, wait till the last 5 minutes (so you do not over cook them)
8. Put linguini on a plate when done and scoop the sauce and clams & shrimp to serve

STUFFED CLAMS

From Matt Pescatore

INGREDIENTS

- 10 pounds of cherrystones
- 1/2 stick of butter
- 3 tablespoons of olive oil
- Stuffing mix
- Parsley
- 1 pound of chopped shrimp
- Lemon for serving

PROCEDURE

1. In a large pan, add clams and about 1 inch of water and place on stovetop with high heat
2. As the water boils they will open, remove them from the pan then remove the clam from the shell. Keep the shells
3. Once they all opened up, slowly transfer the juice to another pan keeping any sand from the clams at the bottom of the pan preventing it from going it into the second pan
4. Chop the clams into smaller pieces
5. In a sauté pan, heat up butter then saute the clams and shrimp till cooked
6. Add the juice of the clams, parsley and bring to a boil
7. In a separate pan, add the stuffing and the clam juice mixture and mix
8. Scoop the stuffing mix into the clamshell and bake for around 15 minutes then broil to brown and serve

PAN SEARED SCALLOPS

From Matt Pesccatore

INGREDIENTS

- 1-2 pounds of scallops
- Salt
- Pepper
- Parsley
- Thyme
- Lemon
- 1/2 stick of butter
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil

PROCEDURE

1. In a mixing bowl, add the scallops and season with salt, pepper, parsley, and thyme (about a tablespoon each
2. Mix well in a pan (cast iron preferred)
3. Heat butter and oil till very hot (be careful not to burn)
4. Add the scallops and cook on all sides making sure to get a good sear on all sides
5. Place on a plate and drizzle with lemon juice then serve

SAUTEED MUSSELS

From Matt Pescatore

INGREDIENTS

- 5 pounds of mussels
- 1/2 stick of butter
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 tablespoon of pepper
- 1 cup of white cooking wine
- 3/4 cup of chopped parsley
- 1/2 cup of chopped garlic

PROCEDURE

1. In a frying pan, add butter, olive oil, and garlic
2. Saute till garlic starts to brown
3. Add mussels and cooking wine while turning the mussels frequently
4. Once they are all open, add the parsley and black pepper
5. Cook for another 3-4 minutes then pour everything into a large serving bowl to serve

Note: You can serve this with pasta as well (similar to linguini and clams)