

Cioppino with Roasted Red Pepper Garlic Spread

Cioppino is a wonderful seafood soup to serve for any dinner occasion. The secret to a good cioppino is to use good quality ingredients and to simmer the base for several hours before serving. I serve it with slices of toasted baguette bread topped with a Roasted Red Pepper and Garlic Spread.

Ingredients

5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 large white onion finely chopped (about 2 ½ cups)
1 large fennel bulb finely chopped (about 2 ½ cups)
4 shallots finely chopped (about ½ cup)
4 large garlic cloves finely chopped (about 2 tablespoons)
1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper flakes
1 (15 oz) can tomato paste
2 (28 oz) cans diced tomatoes in juice
4 cups fish stock (preferably halibut stock)
1 ½ cups dry white wine (Pinot Grigio recommended)
2 bay leaves
2 teaspoons salt
1 pound uncooked large shrimp peeled, deveined and cut in halves
1 pound large scallops cut into 1- inch chunks
1 pound halibut fillet cut into 1- inch chunks
1 pound Chilean sea bass fillet cut into 1- inch chunks
(You can substitute the fish with any other firm-fleshed fish fillets that you prefer; you can also add shellfish such as mussels and clams. If using shellfish add them 5 minutes before you add the fish and discard any that do not open)

Roasted Red Pepper Garlic Spread - see recipe

Preparation

Heat the olive oil in a large cast iron or other large pot over medium heat. Add the onion, fennel, shallots and salt and sauté until translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and sauté another 2 minutes. Add tomato paste and sauté for one minute. Add tomatoes with their juices, white wine, fish stock, and bay leaves. Cover and bring to a boil then simmer (partially covered) on medium heat for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Add the shrimp, halibut, and scallops and gently stir and simmer until the fish is just cooked thru about 2-4 minutes. Remove from heat and discard bay leaves. Serve immediately with toasted baguette and red pepper garlic spread. The flavor of the soup will be even better if it is simmered on low heat for up to 2 hours longer before adding the seafood. (Bring soup back to a medium simmer before adding the fish)

*Onions, fennel, shallots and garlic may be chopped one day ahead and refrigerated. All fish may be cleaned, cut and refrigerated one day ahead as well.

Serves 8