

LINGUINE WITH CLAM SAUCE

Feeds 2 to 4, depending on portion size
By Dennis W. Viau; my own original recipe

When I first tried working with shallots I sliced one and cooked it in a little oil. I tasted it, wondering what my mind would come up with as a place to put cooked shallots. My mind came up with, “Put this in the trash.” It was just awful, kind of a musty, earthy, fungus-like taste that made me think something had spoiled. But I had bought all these beautiful looking shallots. What to do with them? I came up with the idea to caramelize them, like I do onions, and try tasting again. When I tasted the caramelized shallots, I immediately thought, “This is a flavor that would go well with clams.” And thus I created Linguine with Clam Sauce.



This recipe was my traditional evening meal every Sunday for months. Needless to say, I've made this recipe enough times to perfect it. However, as with most recipes, you will want to make adjustments according to your own tastes and preferences. Feel free to experiment.

Ingredients:

1 large shallot (or several small), about 3 ounces total weight
1 10-ounce can clams, drained, reserve broth¹ (see notes below)
1 tablespoon fat (clarified butter or olive oil)
1 large clove garlic, minced or crushed
¼ teaspoon dry oregano leaves
⅛ teaspoon ground pepper, black or white
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
4 to 6 fresh basil leaves (if available)
8 ounces linguini, dry (or 5 ounces fresh pasta dough)
½ cup marinara sauce, homemade or jarred²

Directions:

Slice the shallots into thin slivers and fry in fat over medium-low heat until lightly caramelized, about 10 minutes. Add a little clam broth periodically to prevent sticking and to deglaze the pan. Add the garlic and cook an additional 1 minute. Add the drained clams, oregano, pepper, and olive oil. Tear the basil leaves into small pieces with your fingers (or cut into julienne) and add to the shallot mixture. Combine the mixture and taste for salt.

Cook the pasta until *al dente*³ and add to the shallot mixture. Add the marinara sauce. Mix until the pasta is coated evenly.

Serve hot, garnished with cheese.

Notes

¹ The can or jar will probably contain about 5 ounces of clams and 5 ounces of broth. I buy the big can, 51 ounces or so, and divide it into 10-ounce portions (5 ounces clams and 5 ounces juice). I heat seal these in little plastic pouches and store them in the freezer.

² This is barely enough to color the pasta, but it's enough to bring the flavors together. The clams and shallots provide the flavor, not the sauce.

³ If you don't know the term, *al dente* is Italian and literally means *to the tooth*. The term describes pasta that is slightly chewy, i.e., not cooked all the way through. This is the Italian tradition for cooking pasta.