

Manhattan Clam Chowder

Ingredients:

3 slices bacon, cut into thirds
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 carrots, peeled and chopped
2 celery stalks, chopped
1 onion, chopped
2-3 cloves garlic, pressed
½ cup white wine
½ teaspoon dried thyme
2 bay leaves
1 (14 oz.) can diced tomatoes (with juices)
2 (8 oz.) bottles clam juice
1 pound red potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
2 (10 oz.) cans baby clams (with juices)
12-18 live small clams (e.g., Littleneck or Manila) (optional)
Cholula, Tabasco or other hot sauce
salt & pepper
chopped parsley for garnish

Directions:

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven (or other large, heavy-bottomed pot) over medium-high heat, add the bacon and cook until browned and crispy -- about 10-12 minutes. Remove the bacon to a plate and chop or crumble it into small pieces when it cools.

Add the carrots, celery, onion and a dash of salt to the rendered bacon fat in the pot and cook until the veggies soften -- about 6-8 minutes. Add the garlic and bacon and cook until fragrant -- about 1 minute. Add the wine, stir to scrape up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot, and cook until the liquid reduces -- about 2-3 minutes.

Add the jars of clam juice and the clam juice from the canned clams (reserve the clams.) Add the tomatoes, thyme and bay leaves and turn up the heat. While the chowder heats to a boil, peel and cut the potatoes and add them to the pot. Cover the pot, reduce the heat and simmer until the potatoes are done -- about 30-40 minutes. Smash about ⅓ of the cooked potatoes with the back of a spoon against the side of the pot.

Add the canned clams and the live clams (if using) and cook until all the live clams open up -- about 5-10 minutes. Add a few dashes of hot sauce and salt & pepper as needed. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve with good, crusty bread.