

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 at end)
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 linguine, 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.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.

STEP-BY-STEP

1



I buy chopped clams in the big can at the warehouse store and portion the contents down to smaller amounts (5 ounces clams and 5 ounces clam broth per portion). I use a heat sealer and food-grade poly tubing to seal these portions in small plastic pouches I can then store in the freezer.

2



I do a similar thing with caramelized shallots. I caramelize a lot of shallots and then portion them into pouches of about 1 ounce each. As you'll see below, a few ounces of shallots caramelize into a small volume after most of the water in them has been cooked away.

3



If you're not familiar with shallots, this is what they look like in the store. The size varies quite a bit. The bulb on the left is made up of two cloves. The bulb and single clove above weighed 3.1 ounces together.

4



Slice them into long slivers, cut thin. They don't need to be chopped.

5



Place the shallots in a skillet with some oil and cook over medium heat. If the shallots stick too much, pour in a little clam broth to deglaze the pan. Cook 10 to 20 minutes, reducing the heat as the moisture evaporates.

6



After the cooking time the shallots will have a golden caramel color and the volume of the shallots will be greatly reduced, due to cooking off most of the water. I also caramelize onions and store them in heat-sealed plastic pouches in the freezer. I'll buy a 10-pound bag of onions at the warehouse store and caramelize all the onions using two large skillets. It's a big cooking day as it takes about 2 hours, but I end up with plenty of caramelized onions for other recipes.

7



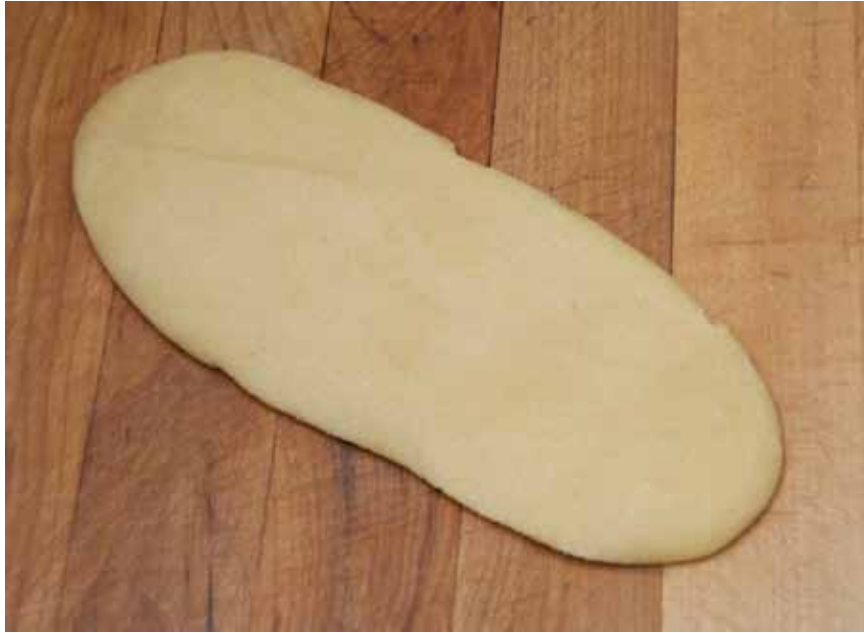
Add the clams with broth to the caramelized shallots along with the oregano, fresh ground pepper, and olive oil. Simmer over medium-low heat to reduce the liquid.

8



This is a ball, about 6 ounces, of homemade pasta dough. You can use dry linguine instead. Cook according to package directions. In another recipe I show how to make pasta from scratch.

9



Flatten the ball of pasta to prepare it for the rollers in the pasta machine.

10



Keep feeding the pasta dough through the machine rollers to knead it. Dust it occasionally with flour to prevent sticking. Then turn the wheel to adjust the rollers closer and closer together to make the dough thinner on each pass. On my machine #1 is the widest space between the rollers and #7 is the narrowest. For linguine I roll the pasta to a thickness of #4.

11



I have a linguine attachment for my pasta machine. A close look at the cutter shows that the linguine has a flattened oval shape.

12



The raw linguine comes out of the machine looking like this, sort of like spaghetti.

13



You don't need a linguine attachment. You can roll the pasta dough to a flat sheet and then use a knife to cut pasta strips about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wide. Heat water to boiling in a saucepan and boil the pasta about 3 minutes. If you are using store-bought dry linguine, follow the cooking instructions on the package.

14



Place the larger basil leaves on the cutting board with the length going sideways and stack any smaller leaves on top. Roll up the leaves to look like a little green cigar and cut into strings about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch wide (julienne). You can cut them thinner into little threads and this is called *chiffonade*.

15

Stir the basil into the clam mixture.

16

Stir in the marinara sauce. Taste and adjust for salt. Heat until almost bubbling. Drain the cooked pasta and combine with the sauce, or place the cooked pasta on a plate and spoon the sauce over it.

17

The final dish of linguine with clam sauce. A final garnish of fresh chopped Italian parsley would dress it up a little.

18

This is my favorite photograph of linguine with clam sauce. I took this picture a long time ago. The lighting isn't good, but the presentation is better than in most of my photographs. Although, I learned later from a professional photographer, fewer props on the table would be better. Live and learn.

Conclusion

With store-bought clams and linguine, this is not a difficult dish to make. Caramelizing the shallots takes time. What pleases me the most is the symphony of flavors. Nothing stands out. You don't taste it and say, "Oh, that's a lot of garlic!" The various flavors are in balance.

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.