

Niall Sabongi's Seafood Chowder

Cockle & Smoked Coley Chowder (Serves 4)

This chowder is light, zesty, refreshing and hearty without being thick and gloopy. It's super-fast to put together and can be rustled together in minutes as a light supper or starter. In the Café we serve it with a cheddar cheese scones that's baked for us by Patrick from the Firehouse Bakery in Delgany.

For the recipe you can use any smoked fish, or non-smoked fish if you prefer, and can sub mussels or anything that takes your fancy from the fishmonger's slab. Just when picking your fish, try a lesser known fish like Gurnard, Ling and Coley. I feel the real trick to being sustainable is to just broaden our repertoire of our go-to fish and seafood and therefore taking the attention away from the main catches that we always focus on. We are an Island nation, after all, and should really be enjoying more of the local bounty that our seas offer up.

Ingredients

- **85g butter**
- **A splash of rapeseed oil**
- **1 large shallot, chopped**
- **1 celery stick, peeled and chopped**
- **½ fennel bulb, chopped**
- **1 leek, cut in 2.5cm (1-inch) slices (rinsed well)**
- **12 baby potatoes, washed and quartered**
- **400ml full fat milk**
- **2 bay leaves**
- **Small shallot studded with 6 cloves**
- **200g smoked Coley, skin removed**
- **24 large cockles, rinsed**
- **Handful of chervil leaves**

Garnish with crushed up garlic and lemon zest croutons (see end of recipe)

Method:

1. Melt 30g of the butter with a splash of oil in a large saucepan. Add the shallot, celery, fennel, leek and potatoes and cook over a medium heat for 15 minutes until everything has softened slightly.
 2. Pour over 200ml water, bring to the boil then turn down to a simmer.
 3. Pour the milk into a wide saucepan and add the bay leaves and studded shallot. Bring to the boil then turn down to a simmer.
 4. Add the Coley fillet whole and with skin on to the milk. Poach for 5 minutes until the fish is just cooked. Take off the heat, remove the skin from the fish and pull into large flakes. Put fish to one side and retain the milk.
 5. To the simmering vegetables add your cockles and turn the heat up. Cover with a lid and cook for 2-3 minutes or until all the cockles are open. Take off the heat and discard 50% of the cockle shells and any unopen ones you might have, retain the meat. Pour in the retained milk and bring back to the boil for 2 minutes.
 6. Add remaining 55g butter and stir gently. This will help thicken the chowder slightly.
 7. Add the flaked fish and cockle meat then season well.
 8. Let sit for 2 minutes so the fish warms through but don't over stir so the flakes stay big.
 9. Stir in chervil leaves and serve in warm deep bowls. Top with the crushed-up garlic and lemon zest croutons (recipe below). Add another little fresh micro planed zest of lemon and serve immediately.
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1. For the croutons: start by making a garlic oil. Smash 4 cloves of garlic with sea salt and flat of knife. Place in small bowl then cover with rapeseed oil and allow to infuse.

- 2. While oil infuses, take one baguette and cut off and discard all the crust. Cut into 2.5cm (1 inch) cubes. Spread out on a baking tray in a single layer.**
- 3. Drizzle with a little rapeseed oil then season with fresh cracked white pepper and flaked Irish Sea Salt (I love Achill salt).**
- 4. Place in low oven for 20 minutes or until golden and very hard (no soft centres)**
- 5. Once out of oven and still warm, drizzle with some garlic oil and add some lemon zest. Allow to cool.**
- 6. Will keep well in air tight container out of fridge for up to one week.**