

Classic Mignonette

Makes enough for 1 to 2 dozen oysters

2 tablespoons minced shallot, rinsed briefly under cold water

4 turns coarsely ground pepper-allspice

Salt

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

2 thin slices ginger (optional)

1 tablespoon water

Combine the shallots, pepper-allspice, and a pinch of salt with the vinegar. If using the ginger, add it so that it is submerged in the vinegar. Allow the mixture to sit for at least 10 minutes. Before serving, remove the ginger and add the water to balance the acidity of the sauce. Serve alongside freshly shucked oysters and spoon over them just prior to eating. Use the sauce within 2 hours.

Spicy West Coast Mignonette

Makes enough for 1 to 2 dozen oysters

2 tablespoons minced shallot, rinsed briefly under cold water

3 to 5 thin slices medium-spicy fresh chile pepper, such as Fresno or serrano

3 thin slices fresh ginger

4 turns ground pepper-allspice

Salt

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

A few drops freshly squeezed lime juice

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh cilantro

1 1/2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon

1 tablespoon water

Combine the shallots, chile pepper, ginger, pepper-allspice, and a pinch of salt with the vinegar and lime juice. Allow the mixture to sit for at least 10 minutes.

Before serving, remove the ginger and chile pepper. Stir in the cilantro and tarragon and add the water to balance the acidity of the sauce. Serve alongside freshly shucked oysters and spoon over them just prior to eating. Use the sauce within 2 hours.

Broiled Oysters Rockefeller

Serves 4 to 6

24 large oysters

2 bunches watercress, trimmed

1 bunch scallions

1/2 bunch flat-leaf parsley

16 tablespoons (2 sticks) unsalted butter, divided use

2 teaspoons smoked sweet paprika

A large pinch ground mace

Salt

1 cup heavy cream

4 capfuls Pernod, Herbsaint, or pastis

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

1 to 2 cups panko

Crusty bread, sliced

Lemon wedges

Preheat the broiler to 400F (or medium high). Line an ovenproof tray with rock salt or folded aluminum foil.

Shuck the oysters and discard the top shell. Drain the liquor, reserving 1 cup of it, and arrange the shucked oysters in their shells on the lined tray. Bring a pot of gently salted water to a boil. Briefly plunge the watercress, scallions, and parsley in the water to wilt them. Drain well and, using your hands, lightly squeeze as much moisture from them as possible. Finely mince the greens and set them aside.

Heat 8 tablespoons (1 stick) of the butter in a saut. pan over medium heat. Stir the paprika and mace into the butter, toasting the spices until they release their aromas, about 2 minutes. Add the minced greens and a judicious pinch of salt and continue to cook until the greens have warmed through, about 3 minutes.

Add the cream, Pernod, Worcestershire sauce, and the reserved oyster liquor, stirring to combine over high heat. Cook until the liquid has begun to thicken, about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, cut the remaining 8 tablespoons (1 stick) of butter into small pieces. Remove the sauce from the heat, let cool a minute or two, then whisk in the remaining butter, one piece at a time, until you have a thick, emulsified mixture. Let cool to room temperature.

Divide the sauce evenly among the oysters, then sprinkle the bread crumbs over each oyster. (I like just a few crumbs scattered over each, but I leave this up to you.)

Place the tray on the middle rack of the oven and broil until the sauce and liquor in the oysters begin to bubble, 5 to 7 minutes. Move the tray to the top rack and broil another 3 to 5 minutes to cook the oysters through, brown the tops, and crisp the breadcrumbs. (Pay close attention to this step: the crumbs can go from browned to

burned in a flash. I suggest cooking this last stage with the oven door cracked open and that you keep your attention directed to the task.) The oysters are fully cooked when they are hot throughout and their edges have curled away from the shell.

Serve piping hot from the oven with crusty bread and lemon wedges, if desired. In my kitchen, these oysters are always accompanied by glasses of ice-cold Pernod.

Broiled Oysters with Anchovy-Almond Butter

Serves 4 to 6

24 large oysters, shucked, on the half shell, with liquor
drained and reserved

6 anchovy fillets, minced

12 tablespoons butter, softened

3 tablespoon mayonnaise

3 tablespoon2 chopped fresh tarragon or chervil

Pinch of cayenne

Lemon juice to taste

1/2 cup slivered almonds, crushed nearly to a paste

2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest

Crusty bread, sliced

Preheat the broiler to high. Line an ovenproof tray with rock salt or folded aluminum foil.

Shuck the oysters and discard the top shell. Drain and reserve the liquor, and arrange the shucked oysters in their shells on the lined tray.

Combine the anchovy fillets, butter, mayonnaise, tarragon, cayenne, lemon juice, almonds, parsley, orange zest, and up to 3 tablespoons of the reserved oyster liquor in a small bowl and mix well. Spoon a generous dollop of seasoned butter on each oyster. Place the tray on the top rack of the oven and broil until the butter is bubbling, the almonds are toasted and aromatic, and the edges of the oysters have curled in their shells. Remove from the broiler and serve immediately with crusty bread.

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Shuck the oysters and discard the top shell. Drain and reserve the liquor, and arrange the shucked oysters in their shells on the lined tray.

Oyster Stew

Serves 2

1 clove garlic, halved

2 1/2 cups whole milk

12 large oysters, shucked, liquor reserved

2 tablespoons butter

Dash of amontillado sherry

Salt

Smoked sweet paprika or freshly ground pepper-allspice

Lots of crusty bread or oyster crackers

Rub the garlic clove inside a medium saucepan in order to give soup just a scent of garlic. Discard the garlic, add the milk, and bring to steaming over low heat. Add the shucked oysters and their liquor and simmer until the edges of the oysters begin to curl, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the butter and sherry and season with salt. When the butter has melted, divide the stew into 2 bowls. Garnish with either paprika or pepper-allspice, and serve immediately with bread or crackers.