

Vince Pardo's Cioppino (San Francisco Style Zuppa di Pesce)

Cioppino is a great San Francisco seafood dish, created by the Italian fishermen that settled in that area of California. These immigrant fishermen and restaurateurs, used local products to recreate their native "Zuppa di Pesce", ("Soup of Seafood"), the Italian version of the French "Bouillabaisse". Recipes vary depending on what seafood is fresh and available.

A bowl of Cioppino, a loaf of good firm crusty bread, to soak up the rich broth, and a bottle of good wine is all you need, but it can be served with a clean, sharp salad or a side of pasta coated with a little of the rich Cioppino broth.

Ingredients and preparation for 6 servings:

In a large stockpot, sauté the following until the onions begin to caramelize:

- 1 large Spanish onion (chopped fine)
- 1 medium green pepper (seeded and chopped fine)
- ½ cup celery (thinly sliced)
- 8 large cloves garlic (minced or pressed)
- 1/2-3/4 cup olive oil (just enough to sauté the above)

Add the following to the sautéed mixture, bring to a boil, and then simmer for 30 minutes (covered):

- 1 28 oz. can peeled Italian tomatoes (diced)
- 1 8 oz. can tomato sauce
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 16 oz. clam juice or fish stock

For more flavor, you may add some pieces of crab (fins or bodies) or a few mussels to the mixture at this time. They will be over cooked and can be discarded later.

Add the following and simmer for 10 more minutes (uncovered):

- 2 cups dry white wine
- ½ stick butter
- 2 tablespoons fresh basil (chopped)
- ½ teaspoon ground fennel seed (optional)

After the above has simmered for 10 minutes, taste the broth and adjust spices to taste, prior to adding the seafood.

Add the following and simmer for 10 more minutes, or until the clams and mussels open and the shrimp turn pink. Layer the seafood into the broth in the following order, with

clams on top (Note the suggested per person seafood quantities if preparing for other than 6 people):

- 1 pound firm white fish (cut into 1 oz. pieces) / 2-3 oz. per person
- 1 doz. large sea scallops / 2 per person
- 1 pound (30 count) shrimp or 12 large prawns (peeled or with shells split) / 5 shrimp or 2 prawns per person
- 1 ½ doz. mussels / 3 per person
- 1 ½ doz. small clams / 3 per person

Optional:

- 3 lobster tails (split in half)
- 1-2 Dungeness crabs (in pieces), 3-6 blue crabs (cut in half), 6-12 stone crab claws (cracked) or other crab; vary quantity with the size of the crabs.

Use whatever available fresh seafood you prefer, but vary the above quantities accordingly. If you need more broth to cover the seafood, add more clam juice and/or wine.

Remember that large prawns will take longer to cook than 30 count shrimp; sea scallops will take longer than small bay scallops. The key is to not over cook the seafood, and if necessary, stage the timing of the seafood's placement into the pot. This will ensure that everything is finished cooking at the same time. Also, the seafood will continue to cook in the hot broth even after being removed from the heat. So, remove the Cioppino from the heat a little early, unless you are going to serve immediately.

When the Cioppino is removed from the heat, garnish with:

- 1 bunch Italian parsley (leaves only/lightly chopped)
- and serve immediately with firm crusty bread to soak up the rich broth, a good dry wine and lots of heavy napkins.

If you are serving a side of pasta, reserve some of the broth to coat the pasta with a little olive oil.

Buon Appetito!