

This Lobster Bisque is Better Than Sex

Hey, I'm not the one who shouted it out...they did, but I did consider the concept once before. You see, I have this group of tremendous and passionate foodie friends; they inhabit my supper club and like me, live their lives, loving and adoring food. They are the ones who said it, proclaiming raucously this particular Lobster Bisque was better than sex. Before I knew it, the terms orgasmic and seductive were thrown out there. I unexpectedly felt exposed at the dinner table. Had I really created something better than sex? I guess that depends upon the state of your sex life but I will say this, this bisque is incredibly sexy.

It all started in the late 90's when my husband and I would frequent "The Grill", a restaurant at the Ritz Carlton-Laguna Niguel. Our friend Jim was the head chef and we were in love with his version of Lobster Bisque. We would sit at our table, almost giddy with excitement until our waiter delivered the empty, shallow bowls except for the two prawns placed strategically in the center. He then artfully ladled in the velvety goodness until only the prawn's tails were visible. He quickly left us to privately slurp the exquisite bounty present before us.

We desperately wanted to replicate the amazing bisque in the confines of our own kitchen. Every visit to the restaurant, every taste, brought us a little closer to bringing its luscious taste to fruition in our own home. Then the dreaded day came and went. During one of our dinners I questioned Chef Jim about creating the seafood stock used as the base for the bisque. He lovingly explained his method of a seven-day preparation period with lots of reducing, straining and directions riddled with the use of all kinds of crustacean shells and parts. Ugh. Seven days? Now, I'm a dedicated home cook but seriously, seven days? I decided I'd shelve my quest in creating the bisque and counted my lucky stars we lived within walking distance of the hotel. Then we moved.

I found myself six-hundred miles away from the bisque (now even further) and spent an inordinate amount of time thinking about it, scouring recipes and trying to find a decent surrogate. As luck would have it, I found one; the one now decreed, "Better than sex". It is truly one of the most amazing recipes I turn out of my kitchen. Never disappointing, always show stopping and a very honest replica of my once beloved bisque.

Lobster Bisque

Adapted from Cuisine at Home



Makes 6-7 cups; can easily be doubled

- 2 lobster tails (10 oz. each), split in half
- 4 cups water
- 1 Tablespoon sea or kosher salt
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter plus 1 Tablespoon
- 1 cup fennel, chopped
- 1/2 cup shallot, chopped
- 1 cup fresh tomato, peeled, seeded, diced
- 2 Tablespoons brandy
- 2 Tablespoons raw white rice
- 1 Tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 thyme sprig
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

You will need 2 lobster tails (about 10 oz. each). It's alright to use frozen tails if fresh are not available. Make sure they are completely thawed out. Split the tails in half with a sharp knife starting at the fan and slice the knife down and through the meat.

Devein the split tail. Look for the vein along the edge of the shell, between the shell and the meat.

Steam the lobster tails, shell-side down (the shell protects the meat from the intense heat of the steam) in 4 cups salted (sea or kosher) water. Using a regular steaming basket works perfectly. The salted water imparts a minimal but not insignificant taste to the bisque; you will use this water later as a base. Steam the tails for 5-7 minutes and reserve the steaming water for the stock.

When cool enough to handle, remove the tail meat with a fork to pull out the steamed tail meat in one piece. Chill the lobster meat until ready to use.

Sauté lobster shells in 2 Tablespoons olive oil over medium-high heat for five minutes to release the flavors.

Deglaze the pan (with shells present and scraping bits at the bottom) with 2 cups dry white wine (Chardonnay works well), 3 cups chicken stock and reserved lobster water from the steaming of the tails. Simmer until reduced to 6 cups; about 45 minutes. Then strain the shells from the stock.

While the stock is simmering prepare the rest of the ingredients. You will need a cup of diced tomatoes, peeled and seeded. The easiest way to peel tomatoes is to place them in boiling water for about 45 seconds. The skin will instantly pull away. Cut the tomato in half and scoop out the seeds and dice.

Sauté fennel and shallot in 1/4 cup unsalted butter, about 5 minutes.

Stir in strained lobster stock, diced tomato, brandy, raw white rice, tomato paste, paprika, cayenne, bay leaf and thyme sprig; simmer 45 minutes. Remove bay leaf and thyme sprig.

You do not need an immersion blender to make this...a regular blender works fine and is what I always use to puree the final liquid. I wanted to try using my immersion blender which worked fine but left the final liquid a little thicker. The blender version is a bit smoother.

Let's talk safety and pureeing hot liquids -- Pureeing hot liquids can be dangerous because steam causes pressure to build inside the blender. It's crucial to puree in batches and work from a low to a higher speed.

When using the blender, I puree in two batches and return the bisque to the pot.

Stir in heavy cream and fresh lemon juice to finish off the bisque.

When you are ready to serve the bisque, sauté the lobster meat in 1 Tablespoon unsalted butter over medium-high heat, just until warmed through. Slice tails into the size of your choosing for serving and arrange in bisque. Serve immediately.