

Steamed Mussels - Moules marinières

This recipe by Iain Hewitson appeared in the Melbourne Herald Sun in 1994. Like many of his recipes it appears to be disarmingly simple yet the results are always exceptional. The mussels open up releasing their juices to provide a delicious soup. Some types of mussels are more suited to this dish than others – check with your fish monger to ensure you have a variety that is not too tough or chewy. Note that no salt is required. This 'classic' recipe can be varied in so many ways, from Italian style to Thai to ...

For two to four people:

- 4 dozen tightly closed mussels
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1 onion finely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 sprigs parsley
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup cream (optional)
- chopped parsley
- crusty bread



Method:

Check with your fishmonger as to whether the mussels need to be cleaned. If so, wash them under running water, perhaps using a soft cloth. De-beard them by pulling out any dangling sea-weed. Then they can be left briefly until ready to cook – drain off excess water before using.

Place the onion, wine, bay leaf, parsley sprigs and pepper in the bottom of a large saucepan. Tip in mussels, bring to the boil over high heat. Cover and cook until the mussels open (5 minutes or so). Shake regularly and, once most have opened, remove all of them to a heated bowl. (We don't discard any that do not open but prise them open once served.)

Once all mussels have been removed, remove bay leaf and parsley sprigs, add cream if using, and boil liquid for a minute or two. Distribute mussels among serving bowls, tip over liquid and sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Serve:

Serves four as an entree or two as a main. Serve with plenty of crusty bread for the soup.

Equipment:

Large saucepan with lid.

Difficulty and Time:

Not difficult (2/5). 15 to 20 minutes to prepare.

Notes and variations:

- Try this 'classic' method first before experimenting with all manner of ingredients.
- Italian recipes may include tomatoes.
- Asian-style recipes may include coconut milk, lemon grass and chilli.