

HICKORY-SMOKED CLAM CHOWDER WITH BACON, YUKON POTATO, AND SMOKED GARLIC

PAIRED WITH 2021 CABERNET FRANC | YIELDS 6-8 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

4 cans chopped Clams (6.5 oz), drained
(reserve 1 cup Clam Juice from the cans)
8 oz thick-cut Bacon, diced
1¼ cups Yellow Onion, finely chopped
1 cup Celery, finely chopped
6 cloves Garlic, unpeeled
1½ lbs Yukon Gold Potatoes, cut into ½-inch cubes
3 cups Clam Broth, plus 1 cup reserved from cans
1½ cups Heavy Cream

1 Bay Leaf
1 tsp Old Bay Seasoning
½ tsp freshly ground Black Pepper
¼ tsp Smoked Paprika
2 tbsp Unsalted Butter
2 tbsp fresh Chives, finely sliced, for garnish
2 tbsp Flat-Leaf Parsley, chopped, for garnish
1 Lemon for garnish
Hearty Bread, Croutons or Oyster Crackers for serving

METHOD

Smoking the Clams and Garlic

1. Preheat a smoker to 225°F using hickory wood.
2. Spread the drained clams in a single layer on a foil-lined mesh rack or perforated pan.
3. Place the whole unpeeled garlic cloves directly on the rack alongside the clams.
4. Smoke for about 20–30 minutes, until the clams are richly smoky and the garlic is softened and aromatic.
5. Remove both from the smoker. Once cool enough to handle, peel the garlic cloves and mash them into a paste. Set aside.

Making the Chowder

1. In a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, cook the diced bacon until crispy. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside, leaving about 2 tablespoons of bacon fat in the pot.
2. Add butter to the bacon fat. Sauté the onions and celery with a pinch of salt until softened and translucent, about 5–7 minutes.
3. Stir in the smoked garlic paste, smoked paprika, and Old Bay seasoning; cook for 30 seconds until fragrant.
4. Add the diced Yukon Gold potatoes, bay leaf, clam broth, and reserved clam juice. Bring to a boil, then lower to a simmer.
5. Cook uncovered for 15–18 minutes or until the potatoes are tender.
6. Gently stir in the smoked clams and heavy cream. Simmer gently for another 5 minutes to warm through without boiling.
7. Season with black pepper and adjust salt to taste (remember, bacon and clam broth are salty).
8. Ladle the chowder into warm bowls.
9. Top with the crispy bacon, sprinkle with fresh chives and parsley.
10. Offer lemon wedges on the side to squeeze over the chowder for a pop of brightness.
11. Serve with hearty bread, croutons or oyster crackers.