

## New England Clam Chowder

*With our neighborhood Chowder Cookoff coming up in October, I went in search of a great Clam Chowder recipe. I am pretty picky about my chowder, and I have tasted a lot of them. For a classic New England Chowder, this recipe from **America's Test Kitchen** fit the bill and hopefully will bring me the cherished trophy and bragging rights at Forest By The Sea. Here are notes from the show:*

For the ultimate clam chowder recipe that was not too thin and watery or too thick and floury, we settled on medium size littlenecks or small cherrystones. We chose waxy red boiling potatoes over starchy ones, which tended to disintegrate in the chowder. We found that thickening with flour was the way to go; it also helped to stabilize the chowder, which can easily separate and curdle without it. Cream turned out to be essential, but our clam



chowder recipe needed only a minimal amount, which gave our chowder richness without overpowering the flavor of the clams. Finally, we chose bacon rather than salt pork, a traditional component of chowder, to enrich the flavor with a subtle smokiness.

Serves 6 (about 2 quarts)

During spring and summer, shellfish spawn, leaving them weak, perishable, and off flavored. Although clams recover from their spawning phase more quickly than mussels and oysters, they should be avoided from late spring through midsummer.

### INGREDIENTS

- 7 pounds mediumsize hardshell littleneck clams, washed and scrubbed clean
- 4 slices thickcut bacon (about 4 ounces), cut into 1/4inch pieces
- 1 large Spanish or Yellow onion, diced medium (about 2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons unbleached allpurpose flour
- 3 medium boiling potatoes (about 1 1/2 pounds), scrubbed and diced medium
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme or 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
- Salt and ground black pepper, or white pepper

**INSTRUCTIONS** 1. Bring clams and 3 cups water to boil in large, covered soup kettle. Following illustration 1, below, steam until clams just open, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer clams to large bowl; cool slightly. Following illustrations 2 and 3, remove clams from shells by opening clams with a paring knife while holding over a bowl to catch juices. Next, sever the muscle from under the clam and remove it from the shell. Reserve meat in bowl and discarding shells. Mince clams; set aside. Pour clam broth into 2quart Pyrex measuring cup, holding back last few tablespoons broth in case of sediment; set

clam broth aside. (Should have about 5 cups.) Rinse and dry kettle ; return to burner. 2. Fry bacon in kettle over medium low heat until fat renders and bacon crisps, 5 to 7 minutes. Add onion to bacon ; sauté until softened, about 5 minutes. Add flour ; stir until lightly colored, about 1 minute. Gradually whisk in reserved clam juice. Add potatoes, bay leaf, and thyme ; simmer until potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Add clams, cream, parsley, and salt (if necessary) and ground pepper to taste ; bring to simmer. Remove from heat and serve.