

Cioppino

Legend has it that Italian fisherman created San Francisco's famous seafood stew by making dinner with what they had left at the end of a long day at sea. A rich, rustic, warming meal, it's meant to be shared with friends on a cool, foggy night. Because what was in the nets determined what went in the pot each night, there are many different versions. Ours calls for fennel and tons of shellfish, but use four pounds of whatever fish makes you happy. Tradition dictates a chunk of sourdough to sop up the broth after the seafood is cleared. That's fine, but this broth is so good you're likely to just pick up the bowl and chug it. Go for it.

See Cook's Notes on tips for buying fish and saving stock.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 ounce pancetta, finely diced
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 small bulb fennel, finely chopped
- 3 large cloves garlic
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1½ cups dry white wine
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes with basil, preferably San Marzano
- 8 cups chicken or seafood broth, or a mix of the two
- 12 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 pounds mussels
- 1/2 pound extra jumbo (16/20s) shrimp, cleaned with tails on
- 1 pound monkfish, or other firm meaty white fish
- 1/2 pound cleaned squid cut into 1/2-inch rings, tentacles halved if large
- 1/4 cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, coarsely chopped, plus leaves for garnish
- 1/4 cup fennel fronds (pulled from thick stems), coarsely chopped
- 1 loaf crusty bread, preferable sourdough, to sop it all up

Directions

Heat the oil in a heavy pot over medium heat until it shimmers. Add the pancetta and red pepper flakes and cook until the fat renders and the pork is lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the onion and fennel and cook until softened and translucent, about 8

minutes. Grate the garlic into the pot, stir and cook for a minute until fragrant. Push everything to the side of the pot and spread the tomato paste in the middle. Cook until it browns, stirring to prevent it from turning black, and then spread it out to brown it again. Do this a couple of times, about 3 minutes total, then stir the tomato paste and vegetables together. Add the white wine, stirring with a wooden spoon to release any bits stuck to the bottom. Boil until almost all of it evaporates, about 5 minutes. Use your hand to crush the canned tomatoes and add them along with their juice to the stew. Then add stock, thyme, bay leaf and salt. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium to maintain a slow boil. Cook until it reduces by half, about an hour. Discard thyme and bay leaves.

Rinse the mussels, scrubbing if necessary and pulling off any beardy bits. Toss any that are cracked or do not close all the way into the trash. Gently stir mussels into stew, cover, and cook for 3 minutes. Bring stew back to a slow boil, stir in shrimp and fish, and cover pot. After about 2 minutes, just as the shrimp start to run pink, add the calamari and cover. Bring the stew back to a simmer and remove it from heat when the shrimp is completely pink and the seafood is cooked but still tender, about 1 minute. Discard any mussels that do not open. Fold in the chopped herbs and garnish with whole parsley leaves. Serve with crusty sourdough bread.

Cook's Notes

If ocean sustainability is important to you, please check the Monterey Bay Aquarium's list of recommended seafood purchasing do's and don'ts at www.seafoodwatch.org.

Freeze leftover stock in small zipper bags or ice cube trays so you can use it on the fly to add flavor to soups and sauces.

total time: 1 hour 50 minutes

active prep: 25 minutes

serves: 6 to 8

difficulty: *medium*