

## Moules Frites

Moules frites are Belgian-born but known the world over. The satisfying combo of salty, fluffy frites and plump, briny mussels competes with any great food partnership — fish and chips, burgers and fries. Dip the fries in the seasoned broth, eat them plain or smear on some mayo like the Belgians do, because it's all acceptable. Bivalve bonus.

### Ingredients

#### Frites

2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled (about 4 potatoes)

About 2 quarts oil, for frying (canola, vegetable, sunflower, peanut – just not olive)

Kosher salt

#### Mussels

¼ pound pancetta, diced

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 leek, white and light green parts, diced

½ bulb fennel, diced

4 sprigs fresh thyme

2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 cup dry white wine or vermouth

4 pounds mussels, scrubbed and debearded, discarding any with broken shells or slightly open and won't close when tapped

1 tablespoon Pernod (optional)

¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped

#### special equipment

deep-fry thermometer

cooking spider

2, 7-quart Dutch ovens (one for mussels, one for fries)

### Directions

#### For The Frites

Cut the potatoes into ¼-inch-thick shoestrings and put into a large bowl of cold water. Swish the potatoes around until the water gets cloudy from the starch being released. Drain, then rinse the potatoes. Refill the bowl with more cold water. Let sit for at least 30 minutes then drain well. Dry the potatoes thoroughly between layers of paper towels on a baking sheet.

Pour oil to a depth of 2 inches in a large Dutch oven. Heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 325 degrees. Working in batches, blanch the potatoes in the oil, stirring gently, until soft and semi-translucent, about 5 minutes per batch. Transfer to a fresh paper towel-lined-baking sheet and let cool completely, at least 15 to 20 minutes. Heat the oil until a deep-fry thermometer reads 375 degrees. Again, working in batches, fry potatoes until golden and crisp, about 5 minutes per batch, allowing oil to return to temperature before batches. Transfer fries to a fresh paper-towel-lined baking sheet, salt immediately and serve while hot.

### **For The Mussels**

Sweat the pancetta in the butter in another large Dutch oven over medium heat until lightly golden, about 5 minutes. Stir in the leeks, celery, fennel, thyme, garlic and bay leaf, and season with salt and pepper. Sweat until soft, about 8 minutes. Add the wine and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook until wine reduces by half, about 4 minutes. Stir in the mussels, cover and steam, shaking pot once or twice, until mussels open, about 5 minutes. Discard the thyme and bay leaf. Stir in the Pernod, if using, and parsley and serve immediately with fries and crusty bread.

**total time:** 1 hour + soaking

**active prep:** 1 hour

**serves:** 4-6

**difficulty:** *medium*