

Spicy Linguini with Mussels

A bowl of mussels cooked in a spicy tomato sauce and tossed with linguine is suitable for any occasion. But this dish would make an outstanding Christmas Eve dinner, especially if you're a couple of fish short of seven. Impressive yet modest, spicy and comforting, it's everything you could hope for. And yes, you can substitute clams for mussels. If you must.

Ingredients

Kosher salt
1/4 cup olive oil
3-4 arbol chiles, roughly crumbled
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced lengthwise
4 anchovy filets, finely chopped
1/4 cup white wine
1 (28-ounce) can crushed San Marzano tomatoes
1 pound dry linguini
One 2-pound bag small mussels, scrubbed, debearded if necessary
1/2 cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped
Crusty bread

Directions

Fill a large pasta pot with insert with water and season generously with salt. Place over high heat and bring to a boil.

Meanwhile, heat a large oval Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pan with a lid over medium-high heat for about 1 minute. Pour in the olive oil, swirl to coat the bottom, and then toss in the arbol chiles, garlic and anchovies, stir quickly to soften the garlic and toast the chiles but do not let them burn, 30 seconds or so should do it. Carefully pour in the wine (it may splatter) and adjust the heat so the wine maintains a low bubble. Let this cook for a minute or two to cook off the booze and reduce a bit. You'll know you've let it cook long enough when the bubbles change and begin to pop more slowly, about 5 minutes. Pour in the tomatoes and keep the sauce at a low bubble with the lid off until the pasta water comes to a full boil and the sauce is very thick, about 5 minutes.

Drop the linguine into the boiling water and stir to submerge and soften in the water. Let it cook to al dente, about 8 minutes, or 2 minutes shy of the package instructions.

Taste the sauce and add salt if necessary. (Remember that your mussels will add a bit of brininess, so use a light hand.) **While the pasta cooks, add** the mussels to the tomato sauce and stir to coat. Get the sauce back to a simmer, then cover the pan and cook until the mussels open, 6 to 8 minutes depending on their size.

Remove the opened mussels from the pot and place them in a serving bowl. Discard any that don't open.

Drain the pasta and pour into the sauce. Reduce the heat to low and allow the pasta to finish cooking in the sauce, stirring until well coated. Add the mussels back to the pot with the pasta and stir to combine. Transfer to the serving bowl. Scatter the parsley over the top and serve with crusty bread for soaking up the extra sauce.

total time: 30 minutes

active prep: 30 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: easy