



Kitchak Cellars, where good food and great wine are both a necessity of life and a lifestyle.

Mussel and Spinach Bisque

Time: About 1 hour
Servings: 10
Wine Pairing: Kitchak Cellars 2006 Vivacé Ermitage Blanc –
Served only slightly chilled
Serve: As a first course with your turkey holiday dinner

Inspiration:

Throughout the Napa Valley, a number of the great restaurants serve wonderful dishes using mussels.* We searched for our “favorite” mussel preparation and found it, not in a Napa restaurant, but in a recipe in Food and Wine Magazine.

Ingredients:

6 ounces baby spinach (about 2 cups)
1 cup Vivace' Ermitage Blanc
1 cup water
3 bay leaves
4 pounds of mussels, scrubbed
1 ½ tablespoons butter
2 medium shallots, minced
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
One 8 ounce bottle clam juice
2 teaspoons tomato paste
Pinch of saffron threads, crumpled
2 ½ cups of milk
1 ½ cups heavy cream
Salt and freshly ground white pepper

Directions:

1. In a sauce pan of boiling water, cook the spinach until just wilted, 30 seconds. Drain and spread on a baking sheet to cool, then gently squeeze out the excess water.
2. In a large pot, bring the wine and water to a boil with the bay leaves. Add the mussels, cover and cook over high heat shaking the pot a few times, until the mussels open, about 5 minutes. Transfer the mussels to a large, rimmed baking sheet to cool. Carefully pour the mussels cooking liquid into a glass measuring cup, stopping before you get the grit on the bottom; discard the bay leaves. Remove the mussels from their shells.
3. In a large saucepan, melt the butter. Add the shallots and cook over moderate heat until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in the flour. Gradually whisk in the reserved mussels cooking liquid and clam juice. Bring to a boil, whisking. Whisk in the tomato paste and the saffron and simmer over low heat, whisking occasionally, until no floury taste remains, about 10 minutes. Stir in the milk and cream and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the spinach and mussels and season with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle into bowls and serve with Kitchak Cellars 2006 Vivacé Ermitage Blanc, chilled only slightly.

* When in the Napa Valley try the mussels in red wine sauce at Bistro Jeanty in Yountville, or the mussels at Cook in St. Helena.

