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## Cioppino

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Seafood Specials

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Cioppino, a seafood soup popularized by Italian immigrants to San Francisco, offers up an appealing assortment of fish and shellfish in a tomato-based broth. We make a quick base by lightly browning onions, which are then simmered with canned tomatoes, garlic, oregano, and clam juice for added briny flavor. To ensure that the clams and mussels don't break up the flaky halibut fillets we poach the halibut in the tomato broth and then transfer it to a platter to keep warm. Then the mollusks are steamed open in white wine and butter and transferred to the broth as they open. The flavorful steaming liquid is combined with the broth and a handful of chopped parsley complete the soup. Then all that's left to do is transfer the halibut to serving bowls, ladle the shellfish and broth over top, and anoint each bowl with a drizzle of olive oil.

### Serves 4 to 6

Any firm-fleshed, 3/4- to 1-inch-thick whitefish (such as cod or sea bass) can be substituted for halibut. Our favorite bottled clam juices are Bar Harbor Clam Juice and Look's Atlantic Clam Juice. Discard clams or mussels with unpleasant odors, cracked shells, or shells that won't close. If littlenecks are not available, substitute Manila or mahogany clams, or use 2 pounds of mussels. If using only mussels, skip step 3 and cook them all at once with the butter and wine for 3 to 5 minutes. Serve with sourdough or rustic bread.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/4** cup vegetable oil
- 2** large onions, chopped fine
- Salt and pepper
- 1/4** cup water
- 4** garlic cloves, minced
- 2** bay leaves
- 1** teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/8-1/4** teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1** (28-ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, drained with juice reserved, chopped coarse
- 1** (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
- 1** (1 1/2-pound) skinless halibut fillet, 3/4 to 1 inch thick, cut into 6 pieces
- 1** pound littleneck clams, scrubbed
- 1 1/4** cups dry white wine
- 4** tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1** pound mussels, scrubbed and debearded

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Extra-virgin olive oil

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat vegetable oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add onions, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper; cook, stirring frequently, until onions begin to brown, 7 to 9 minutes. Add water and cook, stirring frequently, until onions are soft, 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in garlic, bay leaves, oregano, and pepper flakes and cook for 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes and reserved juice and clam juice and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 5 minutes.
2. Submerge halibut in broth, cover, and gently simmer until fish is cooked through, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove pot from heat and, using slotted spoon, transfer halibut to plate, cover with aluminum foil, and set aside.
3. Bring clams, wine, and butter to boil in covered 12-inch skillet over high heat. Steam until clams just open, 5 to 8 minutes, transferring them to pot with tomato broth as they open.
4. Once all clams have been transferred to pot, add mussels to skillet, cover, and cook over high heat until mussels have opened, 2 to 4 minutes, transferring them to pot with tomato broth as they open. Pour cooking liquid from skillet into pot, being careful not to pour any grit from skillet into pot. Return broth to simmer.
5. Stir parsley into broth and season with salt and pepper to taste. Divide halibut among serving bowls. Ladle broth over halibut, making sure each portion contains both clams and mussels. Drizzle with olive oil and serve immediately.

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## TECHNIQUE

### CLEANING CLAMS

Most clams these days are cultured. After being dug, they are usually held on flats submerged in salt water for several days. During this time they expel grit they have ingested; scrubbing is only necessary to remove exterior sand and grit before cooking.

## TECHNIQUE

### ONE AT A TIME

Cooking the halibut, then the clams, and finally the mussels ensures that each component is perfectly done.

**SIMMER HALIBUT IN POT:** The halibut needs just 15 minutes in the pot; set the cooked fish aside before adding the cooked shellfish.



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### STEAM CLAMS AND THEN MUSSELS IN SKILLET:

Transfer the clams and mussels to the pot as they open; using a skillet makes it easy to leave grit behind when pouring the cooking liquid into the pot.

