

## Calypso Oyster Stew

From *Kathy Casey's Northwest Table*

In the Northwest, oyster stew is a Christmas Eve supper tradition. Still rich, but lighter than the traditional stew made with heavy cream, this version has lots of goodies.

Makes 6 cups, or 4 entrée servings

One 16-ounce jar or 2 cups freshly shucked extra-small oysters with their liquor

1/2 to 3/4 cup clam juice or chicken stock

2 slices raw bacon, minced (about 1/4 cup)

1/2 cup diced white onion

1 cup domestic or wild mushrooms such as button mushrooms or chanterelles, thinly sliced (about 5 ounces)

1/2 cup thinly sliced celery

1/2 cup 1/4-inch-diced carrot

1/2 cup 1/4-inch-diced red bell pepper

1/4 cup dry sherry

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon Tabasco sauce

1 cup cooked large-diced or quartered red potatoes

1 tablespoon cornstarch

1 1/4 cups half-and-half

3/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

#### Garnishes

Chopped parsley

Lemon wedges

Drain the oysters, reserving the liquor. Set the oysters aside. Measure the liquor and add clam juice to make 3/4 cup total. Set aside.

In a large, heavy saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat, sauté the bacon for about 3 minutes, or until half cooked. Add the onion, mushrooms, celery, carrot, and bell pepper. Reduce the heat to medium and sauté the vegetable mixture for about 4 minutes, stirring often. Stir in the sherry and thyme, then add the reserved oyster liquor, the Tabasco, and potatoes. Increase the heat to high and bring to a low boil.

Whisk the cornstarch into the half-and-half in a bowl, then whisk the mixture into the gently boiling stew. Immediately add the oysters and heat just until the oysters plump and their edges are ruffled. Season with the salt and pepper, adjusting for taste.

Spoon into serving bowls and sprinkle with the chopped parsley. Serve with lemon wedges for squeezing.