

Clams with Sherry

By Chef José Pizarro

Serves: Four

Ingredients

Please remember that clams, like mussels, must be totally fresh when you buy them; don't use frozen ones, and throw away any whose shells are open. By law, clams are sold in clean (tap) water, but I like to put them into salted water for an hour before cooking them, just to make doubly sure that there is no sand inside the shells. Next, put them into lots of tap water for 20 minutes – to rid the clams of saltiness. This is a bit of a bother, but definitely worth it.

3 tbs extra virgin olive oil

1 banana shallot, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

800g clams

200ml Palo Cortado sherry (drink the rest of the bottle with the finished dish)

1 thyme sprig

Freshly ground black pepper

150g Serrano ham, diced

handful of flat-leaf parsley, chopped

Method

1. Pour the oil into a lidded saucepan that's large enough for the clams to fit easily in a single layer on the bottom as well as house the clams once they're open.
2. Sauté the shallot and garlic in the olive oil over a low heat, making sure they don't brown. Next, add the clams, sherry and bring to the boil, to let some of the alcohol evaporate.
3. Add the thyme and pepper and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Leave the clams for 2 minutes. Check, and continue cooking if necessary – they will cook in less than 4 minutes. As soon as most of them are open, take the pan off the heat. Discard any clams that have remained shut.
4. Add the ham and the parsley and serve immediately.