

GOURMET RECIPES

Great Classics Are Here!

Thomas Keller is back, and he's bigger than ever! The proprietor of Napa Valley's French Laundry restaurant, whose eponymous cookbook is in its 18th printing, has just produced the long-awaited follow up, *Bouchon*, which is named for his other restaurant, a wildly popular bistro. Keller jokes that he opened Bouchon (the restaurant) so that he'd have a place to eat after cooking all night at the French Laundry. He went on to say "The truth of it is that bistro cooking is my favorite food to eat... roast chicken and a salad of fresh lettuces with a simple vinaigrette.

Such preparations are almost universally appealing, and represent what's true and durable in the expanding field of the culinary arts, and are forever satisfying to eat."



Thomas, we totally agree. And we love *Bouchon* for this, and several other good reasons. For starts, the feast begins with the eyes. Photographs, both colour and black and white, are liberally sprinkled through out the large-format book, and are such fun, whether a candid shot in the working kitchen or a gorgeous plated dinner just ready to be served. Then the food... Keller tells us that the recipes in *Bouchon* fall into a category of food served at what we think of as a bistro, a type of restaurant with origins in nineteenth-century Paris that has become all but universal.

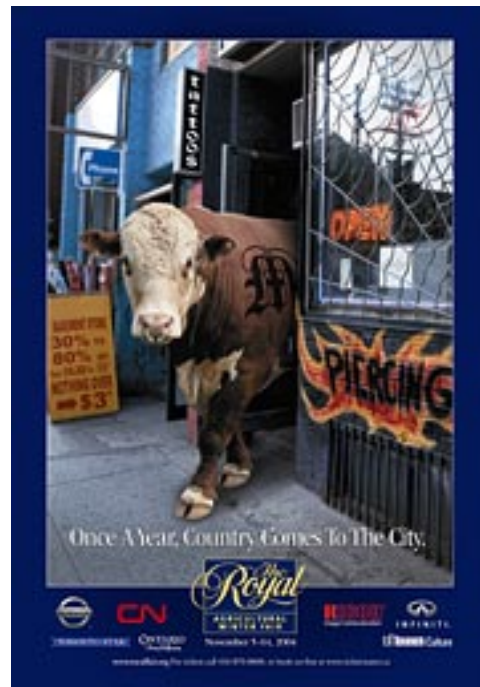
We love the book, as it got us centered again on the basics, plus great additions. The clam recipe we've given you is a good example; sure, it's your standard, foolproof method of steaming clams, but Keller has elevated the dish with the addition of a garlic confit and Soffritto, plus a tasty crouton with Tapenade on the side.

We're reminded that it's easy to make up such cooking "Building Blocks"

as Keller calls them, and keep them on hand to transform a simple dish into a five-star meal. An entire section covers basic preparations and techniques such as confits, stocks, broths and butters, and sweet doughs, sauces and creams. Keller is also very detailed, and while he expects the reader to know a few basics, he still walks you through each recipe step by careful step.

And what recipes... we couldn't get excited about the tripe, but it's manna for many. On the next page we found a glorious Boeuf Bourguignon, then Scallops with Citrus-Braised Endive, Gnocchi with Mushrooms and Butternut Squash... and so on and happily on to the most glorious desserts this side of Paris. Vive le Bouchon!

There's more, and it's not the *non sequitur* that it might appear. Our favourite fall event, The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, is just opening, and runs November 5–14 in Toronto. Like Bouchon, this is an endearing classic brought up to date! It may be Royal, but this fair brings the country to the city with horse shows in one ring and young farmers proudly showing their prize piggies or cows in another. It's wonderful fun to watch bejeweled matrons hike their satin gowns to view designer chickens while enjoying French fries and champagne! The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is the largest indoor combined agricultural, horticultural, canine and equestrian event in the world. Going to be in Toronto the next two weeks? Make sure you come by the one and only Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. See you there!



On today's menu:

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The World's Best French Fries

Pommes Frites

No matter where you are, really, nothing beats a great fry, and who better than Thomas Keller in *Bouchon* to give us his secret for the best version ever. Watch out: they are seriously addictive!



Keller says the russet potato is the best for fries because of its high starch content and its shape. Tom, please... come fry with me!

- Large russet potatoes (2 per person), washed
- Peanut oil for deep-frying
- Kosher salt

Set out a large bowl of cold water. Using a potato cutter, a mandoline, or a knife, cut each potato into sticks $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick and $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and place in the water. Discard any cuts that are irregular; they'll cook unevenly. When all the potatoes have been cut, change the water several times until the starch has been rinsed from the potatoes and the water remains clear. (The potatoes can be refrigerated in the cold water for several hours.)

For the first frying:

Fill a deep fryer or a large heavy pot with 3 to 4 inches of good peanut oil for the best flavour and heat to 320°F.

Remove the potatoes from the water and drain well on paper towels. Place a handful of potatoes in the hot oil, using a basket insert if you have one; shake the basket a few times or stir the potatoes. Do not crowd the potatoes; there should be at least twice as much oil as potatoes. Fry until the potatoes are cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes; they shouldn't be any darker than a very pale gold. Remove the fries from the oil and drain on paper towels. Repeat with the remaining potatoes. (The blanched potatoes can be held for 2 to 3 hours at room temperature.) Reserve the oil in the fryer or pot.

For the second frying:

Reheat the oil to 375°F. Add one portion of the fries at a time and fry for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the potatoes are a deep gold with a crisp exterior. Quickly drain on paper towels, sprinkle with salt, and serve.

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...

If, like me, you think that potatoes and salt are two food groups unto themselves, then you'll want to have wine with your fries: My suggestion is either Beaujolais at room temperature or a lightly chilled Sauvignon Blanc.

Clams Marinières with Soffritto
Palourdes Marinières au Soffritto



Read the whole recipe through, as there are several parts that must be prepared in advance. Worth it, though – you've never had clams like this. We love the "extras" in Bouchon that Keller adds; the garlic confit has now become a regular occupant of our refrigerator!

Makes 4 divine servings

Croutons

- 1 Baguette (about 2 ½ inches wide)
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt

Clams

- 2½ lbs Manila clams
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup minced shallots
- 2 tsp minced thyme
- 24 cloves Garlic Confit (recipe below)
- ¼ cup Soffritto (recipe below)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
- 4 Tbsp (2 oz.) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup Aioli or Tapenade (recipe below)
- 2 Tbsp chopped Italian parsley
- Cracked black pepper

For the croutons:

Preheat the boiler. Using a serrated knife, cut the baguette on a severe diagonal to make 4 slices that are about 9 inches long and ¼ inch thick. Place the croutons on a baking sheet, brush both sides lightly with olive oil,

and season with a pinch of salt. Place under the boiler and toast until lightly browned on the first side, then turn each crouton over and brown the second side. Set aside.

For the clams:

Wash the clams under cold running water; if they are very dirty, scrub with a clean scouring pad.

The clams cook very quickly; have all the ingredients and the serving bowls ready before you begin to cook. Heat a pot (one with a tight-fitting lid) large enough to hold the clams no more than two deep over medium-high heat. (If you don't have a large enough pot, use two smaller saucepans and split the ingredients between them.) When the pot is hot, add the oil and reduce the heat to medium. Add the shallots and sweat them for a minute, then add the thyme, garlic confit, soffritto and salt and pepper to taste. Stir the mixture for a minute to bring out the flavour of the soffritto.

Increase the heat to high, add the butter and clams, and toss the clams in the soffritto mixture. Cook for 30 seconds, then add the wine. Cover with the pot lid and let the clams steam until they open, 30 seconds to a few minutes, depending on the pot. If the clams have not opened after a minute, stir them and cover the pot again.

Meanwhile, spread each crouton with a tablespoon of aioli or tapenade.

When all the clams have opened, stir in the parsley and a large pinch of cracked black pepper. Divide the clams and broth among four serving bowls, place a crouton alongside each, and serve immediately.

Garlic Confit

Keller says, "At the restaurant, garlic confit is used in so many preparations that we consider it to be a pantry staple. It's such a great flavouring device for everything from shellfish to mashed potatoes, or to be stirred into soup or spread on a baguette for a tartine. The oil the garlic is cooked in can be used as well."

Makes 1 cup

- 1 cup peeled garlic cloves (about 45 cloves)
- About 2 cups of canola oil

Cut off and discard the root ends of the garlic cloves. Place the cloves in a

small saucepan and add enough oil to cover them by about 1 inch – none of the garlic cloves should be poking through the oil.

Place the saucepan on a diffuser over medium-low heat. The cloves should cook gently: Very small bubbles will come up through the oil, but the bubbles should not break the surface. Adjust the heat as necessary and move the pan to one side of the diffuser if it is cooking too quickly. Cook the garlic for about 40 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes or so, until the cloves are completely tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. Remove the saucepan from the heat and allow the garlic to cool in the oil.

Refrigerate the garlic, submerged in the oil, for up to a month.

Soffritto

This is one of Keller's "Building Blocks" in cooking. Soffritto is onion based, and most commonly found in Italian, Spanish and Catalonian cooking in various versions to add depth and richness to many dishes and sauces. In this rendition, the onion is cooked very slowly in olive oil until it's completely caramelized – the colour of golden raisins. A tomato purée is added and caramelized in the oil as well, resulting in a rich, sweet, almost jammy mixture. This recipe can easily be increased to make a larger batch, and it will keep for a few weeks in the refrigerator.

- 3 cups diced (1 ¼ inch) Spanish onions (about 1 pound)
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt
- 1 pound (about 6) plum tomatoes
- ½ tsp minced garlic

Combine the onions, oil and a pinch of salt in an 8- to 9-inch-wide saucepan and place over medium heat. As soon as the oil starts to simmer, reduce the heat to low and set the saucepan on a diffuser to maintain an even low heat. The onions should stew slowly but will eventually caramelize. Adjust the heat as necessary so that the oil continues to bubble gently. As the onions release their liquid, the oil will become cloudy, but once the moisture has evaporated, the oil will clear. Cook for about 2½ hours, or until the onions are a rich golden brown (a shade darker than a golden raisin) and the oil is perfectly clear. Check the pan often; if any of the onions have caramelized against the side of the pan, scrape them back into the oil.

Meanwhile, cut the tomatoes lengthwise in half. Gently squeeze out the

seeds and discard. Purée the tomatoes by grating them skin-side-out on the large holes on a box grater. The pulp will go through the grater and the skin will remain in your hand. Discard the skins. (You should have about 1 cup of tomato purée.)

Add the tomatoes to the caramelized onions and cook for 2 to 2½ hours longer, or until the onions and tomatoes begin to fry in the oil. The mixture will sizzle and small bubbles will cover the entire surface. Gently stir the mixture: The tomatoes and onions will separate from the clear oil. Turn off the heat and add another pinch of salt and the garlic. Let the mixture cook in the pan. (The soffritto will keep covered in the refrigerator for up to a week. Drain it before using. The oil can be used to start another soffritto.)

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...

A medium-bodied dry white wine – Muscadet, Soave, Chablis.

Tapenade

Traditionally, tapenade is made of olives, puréed so that their flavour becomes very concentrated – somewhat like pressed caviar, which is caviar that has been crushed and therefore has an intense flavour.

It's a great garnish for fish or lamb, excellent on grilled chicken. It can be added to sauces as a season, thinned out with olive oil and turned into a sauce itself or made into a vinaigrette. This tapenade is seasoned with a white anchovy from Spain that's cured in vinegar before being stored in oil.

Makes 1½ cups

- 8 ounces (about 1½ cups packed) pitted Niçoise olives
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 boquerones anchovy fillet (available at specialty food markets), cut into three pieces
- 1 Tbsp drained nonpareil capers, preferably Spanish
- 1 Tbsp minced Garlic Confit
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp minced Italian parsley
- 1 Tbsp minced chives
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine the olives, mustard, anchovy and capers in a food processor, pulse a few times, then scrape down the sides. Pulse a few more times, leaving the mixture a bit chunky. Add the garlic confit and pulse once or twice.

Add ¼ cup of the olive oil and pulse, scraping down the sides as necessary, until the mixture is finely chopped. Transfer it to a bowl and stir in the remaining olive oil, the parsley, and chives. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (The tapenade can be stored, refrigerated, in a covered container for up to 1 week.) Serve it at room temperature.

Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...

I like Retsina with Tapenade, but if resin is not your cup of tea try a white wine from the Rhône, Inzolio from Sicily or a Pinot Blanc from Alsace.

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