

THE ROW 34 COOKBOOK

Stories and
Recipes from
a Neighborhood
Oyster Bar



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Poached Oysters with Hollandaise and Caviar

Don't toss those oyster shells. Anytime you're shucking oysters, save the pretty, well-shaped, deep-cup shells and clean them out so you can use them for times like this—they'll last for years. For this recipe, look for medium-sized oysters with a deep cup. You'll want to finish this just before serving, and if you have a minute, warm up the oyster shells in the oven right before you assemble them. Serve these as soon as they're assembled—it's one of my favorite ways to enjoy cooked oysters.

Mix the salt with 3 tablespoons water to make a paste, then use the paste to make 18 small mounds on a platter; these will hold the clean oyster shells and keep them upright.

Shuck the oysters, saving the meat and any oyster liquor in a bowl. Discard the top shells and clean out the bottom shells and place on top of the salt mounds on the platter.

Combine the stock, Pernod, and bay leaf in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the oysters and any reserved liquor to the saucepan and return to a simmer. Remove the pan from the heat and let the oysters poach in the warm liquid for 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove the oysters from the liquid, placing each one in a clean oyster shell. Coat each oyster generously with warm hollandaise and top each with the caviar. Serve immediately.

MAKES 18 OYSTERS, 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

1 cup kosher salt
18 medium oysters
1½ cups Vegetable Stock
¼ cup Pernod
1 bay leaf
1 cup Hollandaise Sauce
(following page)
1 ounce caviar, preferably white sturgeon or osetra

FOR THE HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

2 sticks (16 tablespoons) unsalted butter
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
2 sprigs thyme
2 whole peppercorns
1 bay leaf
2 large egg yolks
¼ teaspoon Tabasco sauce
½ teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Hollandaise Sauce

Melt the butter in a small saucepan over low heat. If it begins to foam, skim the foam. Once the butter is melted, keep warm. In another small saucepan, combine the cider vinegar, thyme, peppercorns, and bay leaf and set over medium-high heat; simmer to reduce until only about 1 tablespoon of liquid remains. Set aside to cool slightly.

In a stainless steel mixing bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and 1 tablespoon water. Strain the vinegar reduction into the mixture, discarding the solids. In a saucepan that is large enough that the stainless steel bowl will rest on top, bring a few inches of water to a simmer. Place the bowl with the egg mixture on top of the saucepan and whisk until the yolk mixture doubles in volume and thickens.

Remove the saucepan, with the bowl still on top, from the heat. Slowly whisk the melted butter into the yolk mixture until it emulsifies. Add a few drops of cool water if the sauce becomes too thick. Stir in the Tabasco sauce and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and keep warm.