



Cocktail di Fagioli e Cozze

Pasta and beans with mussels is a popular soup in Naples. My version has no pasta, uses cannellini beans and is served in a Martini glass. The bean soup base can be made conveniently in advance and finished with seafood when needed.

Ingredients:

- One can of cannellini beans*
- One small shallot
- One clove of garlic
- Handful of finely chopped carrot and celery
- Pinch of finely minced fresh rosemary, thyme and sage.
- Two parsley sprigs
- Teaspoon of grated lemon peel
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Peperoncino (optional)
- Seafood or chicken stock**
- Smoked bacon or pancetta or guanciale
- One bag of mussels***
- Kosher salt and black pepper to taste
- Lemon
- Sambuca

Directions:

Gently sauté the finely minced shallot and the clove of lightly crushed garlic. Once the garlic is golden discard. Add the finely chopped bacon, carrot and celery, and peperoncino and gently sauté until all ingredients start to meld. Adding a little white wine in the process helps in the disintegration of the vegetables and deglazes the pan. The aromas emerging as you sauté should drive you mad with anticipation!

Add the can of rinsed cannellini. Add two cans of stock. Simmer and reduce until broth is creamy. At this point you can refrigerate the soup until ready to use.

Steam the mussels in a little white wine. You do not want to drown the mussels, just enough liquid to create steam. Once mussels open take them out of the shell except one for each serving to decorate glass. In a bowl put the mussels in their own broth; add a little olive oil, grated lemon peel and a sprig of parsley.

Once you are ready to serve, reheat bean soup. Add the herb mix. Add the mussels and enough broth to give the soup flavour without diluting it too much. Salt and pepper to taste and add a little splash Sambuca.

Pour into martini glass, add the mussel with shell a little parsley on top, a little squirt of lemon, finishing olive oil and a little pepper.

** Dry beans are best if you have the time to soak them in water overnight. They have a lot more nutrients, no additives and retain a firmer texture.*

***Stock is important. I usually make my own and store frozen. You can buy premade ones in specialty shops. Avoid the boxed ones in supermarkets.*

****The usual bag of about a pound of PEI mussels you find in supermarkets. Feel free to add clams or other shell fish. I usually keep bags of frozen mussels and clams in the freezer. Avoid the canned stuff as it does not taste good.*