

Nancy's crab bisque

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

A most pleasant visit to stop by my friend's house — the home of Nancy and Phillip Allen — and be served a fresh cup of coffee, and generally, something small and delectable. We talk about books, food, gardens or about life in our village.

On Monday, Nancy brought out a cup of crab bisque. The soup reminded me of Christmas Eve and my mother serving a similar delectable broth. And all those smiles, those sea smells, contentment.

The stock carries the soup and the bisque isn't a complicated affair, but the steps are somewhat lengthy. Patience is one of the tricks behind tasty cuisine, as is not cutting corners. The result is sublime. The taste is subtle, refreshing, and an intimate tour of the taste buds — as pleasant an adventure as walking on Benson Beach with two friends most every Sunday morning or eating pate sandwiches in Dead Man's Hollow.

We live for our special friends and strive to cross the bridge that food brings to the table, and beyond. Between neighbors, associates, strangers.

Good food begins with good stock. Boil two Dungeness crabs in about 6 to 8 cups of water, then add 1/4 cup of salt and the same amounts of Old Bay spices and lemon juice. I prefer 10 to 12 minutes of a gentle boil, adding Kaffir and bay leaves to flush out subtle flavors.

Let the crabs simmer until cool and then strain, reserving about 4 cups of stock. Crack open those claws that are filled with the best meat in the world. Sprinkle the

crab into the bowl of that lovely bisque. Finish with the creme fraiche and herbs. The bisque is fine served cold on a hot summer afternoon, so sweet and so flavorful.

Nancy's crab bisque

Stock

- 6 to 8 cups water
- Two whole Dungeness crabs
- Two bay leaves
- Two Kaffir leaves

Bisque

- 6 to 8 cups broth, strained
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 cups cream
- 1 large onion, diced
- 4 stalks celery, diced
- 1 cup bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 cup dry wine (or brandy, as my mother used, better yet)
- 2 mounded tablespoons of tomato paste
- Crab meat, shaken from the two crabs
- Chives or chopped parsley for garnish
- A dollop of creme fraiche (per serving)

Preparation

Saute the onion and diced celery stalks in olive oil and butter. Add the pepper and cook until tender. Deglaze with the wine. Add the stock, bay and Kaffir leaves.

Crab bisque, served with a fresh Dungeness catch.

David Campiche

Thicken with the tomato paste. Stir in the cream and reduce the liquid for a few minutes.

Turn off the heat, strain (or create a smooth consistency with an immersion blender) and then serve with the crab meat along with a dollop of creme fraiche or sour cream in individual bowls. Sprinkle on chives or chopped parsley. Serve

with a dry sauvignon blanc. Toasted slices of grilled bread, rubbed with garlic cloves and olive oil, make a wonderful accompaniment.

David Campiche is a potter, poet, writer and lifelong resident of the Long Beach Peninsula with a keen interest in adventure, fine and culinary arts. Find more about his work at davidcampiche.com.



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