

FOOD & DINING

Buy local and enjoy fresh flavor



The notion of buying local can be applied in various ways, but perhaps no way is as satisfying as buying local foods. Local, in-season foods taste fresh, and eco-conscious foodies can enjoy their meals even more knowing the ingredients did not travel far and wide to make it onto their plates.

Local, in-season seafood is both fresh and affordable, and now is a great time to try the following recipe for "Spring Shellfish Stew with Kale and Pancetta" from Jill Lightner's "Edible Seattle" (Sterling Epicure).

SPRING SHELLFISH STEW WITH KALE AND PANCETTA

Serves 4

- 1/4 pound pancetta, cut into 1/4-inch cubes
- 1 large yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 3 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes, to taste
- 1 small (roughly 1/2 pound) bunch kale, stemmed and sliced into 1/4-inch thick ribbons
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1 28-ounce can peeled whole tomatoes
- 1 8-ounce bottle clam juice
- 3 cups chicken or fish stock
- 3/4 pound manila clams, scrubbed clean
- 3/4 pound mussels, scrubbed clean and debearded if necessary (discard any that are broken or won't close)
- 1 pound halibut fillet, cut into 1-inch cubes

- 3/4 pound (about 12) extra-large shrimp, deveined (optional)
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1. Heat a large, deep soup pot over medium heat. Add the pancetta, cover, and cook until browned, stirring frequently, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pancetta to a paper towel-lined plate, leaving the fat in the pot.

2. Add the onion to the pot and cook until soft, about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic, red pepper and kale, season to taste with salt and pepper, and cook for another 10 minutes, stirring and turning as the kale on the bottom cooks down.

3. Increase the heat to high, add the wine and simmer for 2 minutes.

4. Use your hands to break the tomatoes into small pieces and add them, along with their juices, and the clam juice, stock and pancetta to the pot. Lower the heat to medium and simmer the stew, partially covered, until the kale is soft and the tomatoes begin to break down, about 30 minutes. (You can add a little water, if too much evaporates.) Season to taste with salt and pepper.

5. Add the clams and mussels to the pot and cook, tightly covered, for 5 minutes. Add the fish and shrimp, if using, stirring them into the broth, and simmer, covered, until the fish is cooked and all the shellfish have opened, another 5 minutes or so. Serve piping hot in bowls, sprinkled with the parsley. (Discard any clams or mussels that won't open.)

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