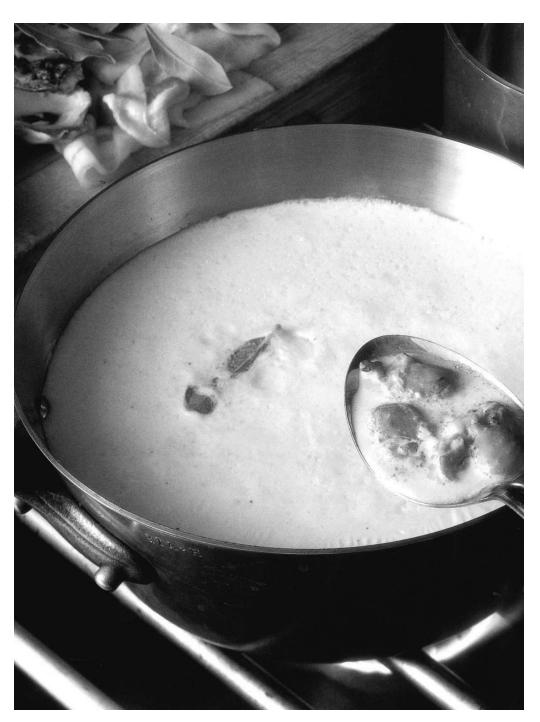


Stew perfect for cold winter days



Few dishes match a season better than stew matches winter. Stew is an ideal meal for cold days. Though traditionally served on New Year's Eve, this recipe for "Oyster Stew" from "The Culinary Institute of America Book of Soups" (Lebhar-Friedman) makes a perfect dish all winter long.

OYSTER STEW

Makes 8 servings

fresh oysters, shucked, juices reserved

bacon slices, minced 4

onion, minced (about 11/4 cup)

cup all-purpose flour

11/2 quarts milk

bay leaf

1 cup heavy cream, heated

teaspoon salt, or to taste

teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste Oyster crackers

Drain the oysters in a colander over a bowl. Reserve the juice.

Heat a soup pot over medium heat. Add the bacon and cook until crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a paper towel-lined plate. Add the onion to the bacon fat and cook until translucent, about 6 minutes. Do not brown.

Reduce the heat to low, add the flour, and cook, 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon.

Add the milk and reserved oyster juice in batches, using a whisk to work out any lumps between each addition. Add the bay leaf and simmer, 20 minutes, skimming as necessary.

Add the whole oysters and continue to simmer until the oysters are barely cooked, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

Add the hot cream and season with salt and pepper. Serve heated bowls, garnished with the reserved bacon and

oyster crackers.



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