

Hot oysters with leeks

Huîtres chaudes aux blancs de poireaux



60-Minute Gourmet

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If I had to produce a list of my favorite vegetables for cold weather, it would certainly include the leek, that delectable green and white root of such a hearty nature that it can be left in the ground all winter if the temperature does not drop beyond 10 below. Although it is a member of the onion family, it has a subtle, irresistible flavor and leaves no aftertaste.

18 oysters in the shell
2 leeks
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
Salt and pepper

2 tsp water
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped shallots
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup red wine vinegar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup + 2 tbsp white wine

1. Preheat the oven to 350°.
2. Open the oysters, reserving their liquor and half of the shells. Put the oysters and their liquor in a saucepan. Set aside. Place the shells on a baking sheet and bake 10 minutes.
3. Cut off the ends of the leeks. Cut off and save for another use the green part of the leeks. Cut the white part of the leeks crosswise into 2-in. lengths. Cut the pieces lengthwise into the finest possible shreds. There should be about 3 cups loosely packed.
4. Heat 1 tbsp butter in a heavy saucepan. Add the leeks, and salt and pepper to taste. Add the water and stir. Cook, stirring, about 5 minutes or until the leeks are wilted. Set aside.
5. Melt 1 tbsp butter in another saucepan and add the shallots. Cook until wilted. Add the vinegar and cook down totally. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the wine. Cook down, stirring often, until the wine is almost totally evaporated.
6. Over low heat, beat in the remaining butter piece by piece. Remove from the heat and stir in the leeks.
7. Heat the oysters and their liquor with the remaining 2 tbsp wine. Cook briefly until the edges of the oysters curl. Carefully transfer the oysters to a warmed dish. Cook the liquid down until reduced to 2 tbsp. Add this to the leek and butter sauce. Add the oysters and stir to blend.
8. Spoon equal portions of the oyster mixture into the oyster shells. Use one oyster per shell. Place in the oven and bake 30 seconds. **3-6 servings.**

Oyster knife from David Mellor, London