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Manhattan Clam Chowder

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By Sam Sifton | Time: 1 hour | Yield: 8 to 10 servings

Ingredients

24 medium-size quahog clams,
usually rated “top neck” or
“cherrystone,” rinsed

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

¼ pound slab bacon or salt pork,
diced

1 large Spanish onion, diced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

2 large ribs celery, cleaned and diced

1 medium-size green pepper, diced

2 medium-size carrots, peeled and
diced

Red-pepper flakes, to taste

3 large Yukon Gold potatoes, cubed

3 sprigs thyme

1 bay leaf

1 28-ounce can whole peeled
tomatoes in juice, crushed or roughly
diced

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

¼ cup chopped parsley.

Preparation

1. Put the clams in a large, heavy Dutch oven, add about 4 cups water, then set over medium-high heat. Cover, and cook until clams have opened, approximately 10 to 15 minutes. (Clams that fail to open after 15 to 20 minutes should be discarded.) Strain clam broth through a sieve lined with cheesecloth or doubled-up paper towels, and set aside. Remove clams from shells, and set those aside as well.
2. Rinse out the pot, and return it to stove. Add butter, and turn heat to medium-low. Add bacon or salt pork, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the fat has rendered and the pork has started to brown, approximately 5 to 7 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to remove pork from fat, and set aside.
3. Add onions, garlic, celery, green peppers and carrots to the fat, and cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are soft but not brown, approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in potatoes, and continue cooking until they have just started to soften, approximately 5 to 7 minutes. Add 4 cups of clam broth, reserving the rest for another use. Add the sprigs of thyme and the bay leaf.
4. Partly cover the pot, and simmer gently until potatoes are tender, approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Using the back of a wooden spoon, smash a few potatoes against the side of the pot to release their starch and help thicken the broth.
5. Meanwhile, chop the clams into bits that are about the size of the bacon dice.
6. When potatoes are tender, stir in tomatoes, and heat them through. Add chopped clams and reserved bacon, stirring to combine. Add black pepper to taste. Let chowder come to a simmer, and remove from heat. Fish out the thyme and the bay leaf, and discard.
7. The chowder should be allowed to sit for a while to cure. Reheat it

before serving, then garnish with chopped parsley. Serve with oyster crackers.