



Cataplana

(makes 4 servings)

Not a dish to eat on your own - get a few friends round, ensure you have a few bottles of crisp Vino Verde and let everyone do their own thing! This soup/stew is a Portuguese classic but we have taken a few liberties and adapted it (more often than we can remember!) You can make it cheap and cheerful with inexpensive fresh/frozen fish in season or push the boat out and pitch in the more luxurious of the sea creatures. It is a delicious experience however you play it.

Ingredients

3 red peppers
4 garlic cloves, peeled
4 thin slices Portuguese Ham (Prosciutto if Portuguese is unavailable)
Zest of one lemon
2 medium onions or 12 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
6 fronds saffron steeped in 100ml vermouth or white wine for 15 mins (or water if you prefer)
1 bay leaf
2 small bottles Clamato juice
2 large or 4 small chorizo sausages (go for the extra spicy ones for an extra hit)
Half a small or quarter of a large monkfish tail, rinsed in cold water and cut into bite-sized cubes
4 fresh scallops, rinsed in cold water, corals removed and sliced lengthwise to produce 8 discs
4 large fresh, raw prawns in their shells, rinsed in cold water
15-20 fresh mussels, scrubbed, de-bearded and with barnacles chipped off (use lots of cold water and change it regularly and bin any mussels that refuse to close when tapped against a hard surface)
Plenty of fresh parsley leaves, finely chopped
A bunch of fresh dill, finely chopped
Small bottle of extra virgin olive oil
Small bottle of light olive oil
Sea Salt Black pepper

Method

TO MAKE THE LISBON PASTE

Grill the peppers under a medium heat until blackened on all sides (or use a blow torch if you have one). Place them in a bowl and cover with cling film for around 10-15 minutes before skinning the peppers and removing the core and seeds.

Blend the peppers in a liquidiser with 2 garlic cloves, 1 teaspoon of salt and a few good grindings of black pepper until smooth, then drizzle in 4-5 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil in a steady stream until the paste develops a rich pink colour and a smooth creamy texture. Pour into a small bowl and cover until required.

TO MAKE THE GREMOLATA

Grill the ham slices under a medium grill until they are chewy but not brittle, drain on kitchen paper, leave to cool then chop very finely until you have ham 'crumbs' (a large knife works well here). Mix in a small bowl with 1 tablespoon of chopped parsley, 1 tablespoon of chopped dill and the lemon zest then cover and set aside.

TO MAKE THE BASE STOCK

Warm 1 tablespoon of the light olive oil in a medium sized pot over a low heat (don't let it smoke) and gently sauté half the onion or shallots and 1 crushed garlic clove until soft (don't let them brown). Strain the saffron/vermouth/wine mix and add the liquid to the saucepan. Add the bay leaf and 1 bottle of the Clamato juice, increase the heat and keep at a rolling boil until the liquid has reduced to around a third of the original quantity. Using a fine sieve, strain the stock into a jug/bowl until required.

TO MAKE THE CATAPLANA

Grill the chorizo sausages until cooked and leave on kitchen paper to drain/cool, then chop into bite-sized pieces.

In a large wide frying/sauté pan (one that you are happy to take to the table), warm 2 tablespoons of the light olive oil (don't let it smoke) and gently sauté the remaining onion or shallots and another crushed garlic clove over a low to medium heat until soft (don't let them burn at the edges). Add the reduced, strained base stock and bring to a simmer.

Gently stir in 2-3 tablespoons of the *Lisbon Paste* and around half a bottle of Clamato juice, increase the heat a little and continue to maintain a gentle simmer. Arrange the chorizo pieces evenly around the pan, then the monkfish chunks, the scallop discs, the mussels and finally the fresh prawns and continue to simmer for a few minutes (add the rest of the Clamato juice if the liquid looks a bit sparse but don't drown the fish).

Turn the fish/shellfish regularly to ensure they are evenly cooked, ensure the prawns are pink on both sides and that the mussels are opening (bin any that don't). Simmer for another couple of minutes to ensure the fish/shellfish are cooked through (have a forkful or two to make sure) and stir in another couple of tablespoons of the *Lisbon Paste*.

Quickly mix some extra virgin olive oil into the *gremolata* until it is moistened but not runny and sprinkle a couple of tablespoons over the cataplana, take the pan to the table and let everyone dig in. Have deep, wide bowls, napkins, forks and spoons at the ready and plenty of wedges of rough brown or sourdough bread.

Serve the extra *Lisbon Paste* and *gremolata* in small bowls so your guests can add a spoonful or two to their bowls or spread them on the bread before dunking into the delicious juices.