



Creamy Mussel & Saffron Soup

(makes 4 servings)

If you love mussels, you will love this soup. The broth is seriously shell ishy but at the same time very delicate and despite the addition of cream, not at all cloying. And, as this soup is in the FatBustForever section and mussels are very rich in protein, minerals and 'good' fats, we feel no guilt whatsoever in advising you to have lots of freshly-baked bread on the side - it is simply one of those soups that demands a bit of dunking!

Ingredients

10 saffron threads (no need for absolute accuracy here!)

300ml strong fish stock (if using ready-made stock or pastes/cubes, make/buy twice what you need and reduce by boiling until you have somewhere close to the required amount of stock)

1.5kg fresh mussels, de-bearded, barnacles chipped off and well-washed (discard any that don't close when tapped against a hard surface)

4 tablespoons double cream

1 tablespoon dry sherry

3 egg yolks

Salt and ground white pepper

Lemon juice

Fresh parsley leaves, finely chopped

Method

Put the saffron threads in a cup, add 1 tablespoon warm water and let them infuse for at least 10 minutes.

Put the stock in a soup pot and bring to a rolling boil. Add the mussels, cover and shake, keeping the heat high until the shells have opened (about 5 minutes). Discard any unopened mussels then drain, retaining the liquid.

Strain the liquid through a very fine or muslin-lined sieve to get rid of any grit or bits of shell and return to a clean pot then shell the mussels and keep them aside, covered while you make the soup. You can keep some in their shells for topping/decoration if you wish.

Add the sherry and the strained saffron infusion to the broth and stir over a low heat until hot but not boiling then whisk the egg yolks into the cream in a cup or small jug and drizzle slowly into the broth, whisking all the time, raising the heat (so you achieve a continuous bubble not

a frantic boil) until the broth thickens slightly. This can take around 5 minutes or more but be patient - you are looking for a double cream sort of thickness, not lumps of scrambled egg in a milky broth!

The minute you have reached the desired consistency, remove the soup from the heat and season to taste with salt, ground white pepper and lemon juice.

Add the shelled mussels and stir gently for a few minutes to allow them warm through before serving with some finely-chopped parsley scattered over the top if desired.