

The Secrets to the Best Clambake Recipe from La Caja China



For equipment, you'll need a Caja China, the roasting box typically used for suckling pigs. You'll also need an 18-pound bag of charcoal, lighter fluid and lighter, newspaper and a 4 to 5 gallon bucket.

Next, you'll need to gather your seafood and accompaniments. The seafood and seaweed can be ordered from Santa Rosa Seafood or your favorite seafood fishmonger.

Lobster Bake on the Beach

Makes 6 servings

- ✓ 6 fresh lobsters about 1 1/2 pounds each
- ✓ 36 littleneck clams
- ✓ 24 large shrimp (head on if possible)
- ✓ 2 pounds linguica sausage cut into 2-inch chunks
- ✓ 2 pounds of small potatoes such as fingerlings or butterball
- ✓ 6 ears of corn, unshucked
- ✓ 6 medium leeks, tops removed
- ✓ 2 pounds lobster packing seaweed
- ✓ Good extra virgin olive oil
- ✓ Sea salt
- ✓ Romesco Sauce (see below)
- ✓ Garlic Butter (see below)
- ✓ Bread

Getting started:

Prior to leaving for the beach or your backyard, precook the potatoes in some salted water. Place the garlic butter in a heavy mason jar that you can place near the fire to melt.

Make 2 foil packets containing equal portions of everything: clams, shrimp, boiled potatoes and chunks of the linguica sausage. Drizzle with olive oil and some salt then wrap up tightly.

Firing up the box: When you get to the beach, fill your bucket with sea water, then place the corn and leeks in the water to soak for about a half hour. Place the seaweed in as well.

Place the entire bag of coals on the top lid of the Caja China and light. When the coals are ready, spread out evenly on the top.

Lift the lid of the box and place all the soaked seaweed inside as a base for the seafood. Add your foil packets and place the live lobsters on top of the seaweed. Close the lid. The packets and lobsters should take about 45 minutes to an hour to roast.



After they're done soaking, place the soaked leeks and unhusked corn directly on the hot coals until the corn is roasted and the leeks look completely blackened, about 20 minutes. Remove the corn to cook slightly. Take the leeks and wrap in several layers of the paper to steam. When the leeks have cooled, unwrap and peel away the blackened layers to reveal smokey tender inside. When the corn is cool, take the husk off. Keep corn and leeks warm in tin foil, on the side of the fire, while the seafood finishes.



After 45 minutes, check the seafood. The lobsters should be bright red and the clams should be all open. If not, let them cook further.

When ready, remove all the seafood and lace on the table with the corn and leeks, on newspaper.

We recommend eating the leeks, potatoes and corn with the romesco and dipping the seafood in the garlic butter.

When done gorging, wrap all the shells in newspaper and dispose, then go jump in the ocean to clean up!



Will's Garlic Butter

Makes about 2 ½ cups

- 1 pound unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons fresh minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon minced shallots
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 ½ teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Place the soft butter in the bowl of an electric stand mixer with the paddle attachment. Add the garlic, shallots, salt and lemon juice. Mix on medium speed until the butter is almost white in color and has the consistency of meringue. (whipping a lot of air into the butter gives the butter a creamy consistency when melted)

Add the chopped parsley and mix until just incorporated. Can be stored in several ziplock bags in the freezer and brought to room temperature when needed. Melt to use as a dip for seafood or spread on any roasted meat to give a boost in flavor.

You can find harissa and piquillo peppers at local grocery stores such as Oliver's and Pacific Market.

Romesco Sauce

Makes about 2 cups

- 8 canned piquillo peppers
- 1/3 cup roasted hazelnuts
- 1/3 cup roasted whole almonds
- ¾ cup roasted garlic, pureed
- ½ cup basil leaves
- 4 anchovy fillets
- 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon harissa (Tunisian hot sauce)

Place all the ingredients in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until the consistency of pesto. Season with salt. Use as a dip for steamed vegetables, a sauce for seafood or a spread on sandwiches. Store in the refrigerator. May be frozen as well.

-- Recipe from **The Press Democrat**