

Corn Chowder and Corn Bread

Chowder must be the all-American, all-time favourite and, like all the classics, it can be made in myriad variations. It originated in mid-18th century France and its name probably comes from the French term 'chaudière' or 'stew pot'. A famous type of American chowder is New England Clam Chowder. It is such a well-known dish, made with potatoes, onion, pork and clams, that a bill was raised in Maine in the 1930s making the use of tomatoes in Clam Chowder a criminal offence. This is a delicious chowder recipe, without tomatoes, and once you get the hang of it you can start to improvise, adding your own wonderful ingredients.

SERVES 8



CORN CHOWDER:

2 tbsp olive oil
150g / 5oz bacon lardoons
200g / 7oz new potatoes cut into quarters
50g / 2oz butter
1 onion peeled and chopped
1 tbsp plain flour
1 litre / 1 3/4 pints milk
8 splashes of Tabasco
300g / 11oz skinless, boneless, sustainable cod cut into 1cm / 1/2 inch cubes
340g tin of sweetcorn kernels
25g / 1oz chopped fresh chives or chopped fresh-leaf parsley
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Corn bread to serve

Put a large pot on a medium heat, glug in a little oil and fry the lardoons until crisp. Dump in the potatoes, butter and onion and stir through for about 5 minutes or until soft. Sprinkle in the flour and continue stirring while you gradually add the milk until you have a smooth consistency. Season with the Tabasco, salt and pepper and leave to gently simmer for 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are just cooked.

Stirring often, drop in the fish and corn and continue cooking for a further 10 minutes, stirring often. Stir in

the chives or parsley and adjust the seasoning. I like lots of black pepper. Serve with the corn bread.

TIP: 500g / 1lb 2oz of fresh clams popped into the soup 5 minutes before the end of cooking with a lid slammed on is gorgeous too.

CORN BREAD: (Makes enough for 2 x 20.5 cm / 8 inch round cake tins)

125g / 4oz melted butter plus a little extra to grease
250g / 9oz plain flour
200g / 7oz polenta or semolina
1 tbsp salt
3 tsp baking powder
2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1 tbsp raw cane sugar
400ml / 14fl oz milk
2 eggs
2 chillies cut in half lengthways, seeded and finely chopped
2 x 340g tins of sweetcorn kernels

Preheat the oven to 220°C / 425°F / Gas Mark 7.

Grease two 20.5cm / 8 inch round cake tins and line the bottom with greaseproof paper.

Mix everything except the chillies and sweetcorn into a smooth, sloppy batter, then throw in the corn with its juice and the chillies. Mix through and pour the mixture into the cake tins. Pop in the oven for 20 minutes, or until golden and springy to the touch.

Cool slightly before slicing and then spread with butter.