

The Kitchen Cafe Takeaway

Velvet Crab Soup (Partan Bree)

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By Michael Smith

Ingredients

A dozen or so velvet crabs (cooked or uncooked)
80 grams chopped onion (approx)
80 grams chopped leek (approx)
80 grams chopped fennel (approx)
80 grams chopped celery (approx)
80 grams chopped carrot (approx)
50 grams unsalted butter
25 grams rice
1 tablespoon tomato puree
1 small piece lemon & orange zest
Juice from the lemon
1 small clove of garlic (finely grated)
150 ml dry white wine
1 litre shellfish stock (fish stock or just water can be used happily)
Good shot of brandy/Madeira
Large bunch curly parsley (washed and finely chopped. Keep the stalks)
A drop or 2 of anchovy essence (auld Scot's seasoning, optional)
Sea salt flakes & freshly ground pepper (to taste)
200 ml fresh double cream



Prep Time: 15 mins
Cooking Time: 40 mins
Serves: 4

Wednesdays, 13:15 – 14:00 bbc.co.uk/radioscotland 92 – 95 FM

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Method

1. Melt the butter in a large, heavy saucepan (at work I use a pressure cooker to speed up the process).
2. Add the prepared vegetables and stir. Cover with a lid, leave on a low heat and cook gently until soft.
3. Meanwhile, open the crabs by removing the body shell from rest of the crab (it should detach itself with a little prising of fingers). Once the inner cavity is open, remove the feather-like "dead men's fingers".
4. With a large, sharp "cook's knife" chop up the crabs, legs, claws and all into small pieces. (This can also be achieved by pounding the crabs down with the end of a rolling pin in another pot).
5. Add the chopped crab to the cooked vegetables along with everything else except, the chopped parsley and cream. Bring to a boil then simmer for 30 minutes (15 mins if using a pressure cooker).
6. Remove from the heat and allow cooling for 10 minutes.
7. In stages, transfer and liquidise the soup in a blender. Strain the blended soup through a conical strainer, pressing it through with a ladle (to remove the crushed shell).
8. Return to the pan, reheat and check seasoning. The soup may be reduced to thicken.
9. Lightly and concentrate the flavour by simmering for 10 – 15 minutes.
10. Add the cream, any patiently picked crab meat and lots of finely chopped curly parsley.
11. A generous squeeze of lemon juice, and for extra measure another dash of brandy. Simmer and stir for 1 minute. Serve.

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