



Brandade

Baked salt cod with herbed breadcrumbs

Serves 4



Jason Varney

Bacalao (salted dried cod, aka salt cod) is a prized ingredient in Spanish cooking that dates back several centuries. Cod that has been salted and dried is an amazing repository of ocean-fresh flavor, which is unlocked through a process of repeated soaking and rinsing. It can be taken in various directions depending on the cooking method. Here we have brandade, traditional in French and Basque cuisines and something else altogether: rich yet delicate in flavor, lush yet light in texture, it's basically an emulsion of bacalao with garlic, potato, and milk, baked to lavish perfection. Note that the salt cod needs to be soaked for 24 hours, with a change of water every 6-8 hours and a thorough rinsing at the end. You can continue to store the soaked cod for 2 to 3 more days in the refrigerator, so long as you keep it immersed in water and continue to change the water daily.

—Chef Jose Garces

From *The Latin Road Home* by Jose Garces, Lake Isle Press, 2012

INGREDIENTS

COD

1 1/2 lb boneless, skinless salt cod

HERBED BREADCRUMBS

2 Tbsp unsalted butter
1 cup finely ground panko breadcrumbs
(be sure to grind in blender before measuring)
1 Tbsp fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tsp minced fresh thyme
Kosher salt

BRANDADE

1 large (12-oz) russet potato, peeled and diced small
2 cups heavy cream
1 fresh bay leaf
1 sprig rosemary
1 cup Caramelized Onions
16 cloves Roasted Garlic
Sliced baguette, buttered or brushed with olive oil
and toasted, for serving

PREPARATION

TO PREPARE THE COD, soak it in a covered container in the refrigerator for 24 hours, changing the water at least once. Drain the fish, rinse thoroughly, drain again, and cut into large chunks.

TO MAKE THE BREADCRUMBS, melt the butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat and add the panko. Toast, stirring often, until the panko is golden brown and evenly toasted, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in the parsley and thyme and season gently with salt. Allow the breadcrumbs to cool to room temperature. If necessary, store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

Place a rack in the middle position and preheat the oven to 375°F.

Boil the salt cod in water to cover in a saucepan until the chunks of fish are easy to flake into smaller pieces with a fork but remain somewhat firm, about 20 minutes. Drain.

TO MAKE THE BRANDADE, meanwhile, in a separate small saucepan, combine the potatoes, cream, bay leaf, and rosemary. Simmer over low heat until the potatoes are tender and the mixture has reduced in volume by about a third, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and the rosemary stem (the leaves will have fallen off). Drain the potatoes over a bowl to catch the cream. While the potatoes are still warm, combine them in a food processor with the cod, onion, and garlic and purée the mixture, slowly adding the reserved cream, until it is very smooth.

Transfer the brandade to a shallow casserole and top with breadcrumbs. Bake the brandade until it is hot all the way through and the top is golden brown, 15 to 18 minutes. Serve with sliced baguette.