

Tim's Clam Chowder

New England Clam Chowder is a thick cream soup made with clams, potatoes, onions, milk, cream, clam juice, flour and butter. There are many versions however, some have bacon or salt pork, some have different herbs and spices, some are not even thickened. Some are made with strong Quahog Clams while others, like mine, are made with sweet tender Sea Clams.

I started making Clam Chowder close to 35 years ago, in my teens. I remember making it in this small pot probably using a gallon of chopped clams with a couple of onions and a few potatoes and I made it a few times a week. Soon I was making it almost every day and figured maybe a larger pot made more sense. Then that wasn't enough so I started using an even larger pot, and then two pots at a time.

Soon I was back to making it every day again - 40 gallons a day, every day of the week. Well, this was getting out of hand so I looked into a steam kettle and decided on an 80 gallon size. I remember thinking, "now this should help", and it did, for a while . . . but before I knew it, I was back up to making it every day just so I could get a day off.

The kettle was pretty big. I had to stand on a milk crate just to see inside and I used a 4 foot stainless steel paddle for stirring . The recipe at that time was up to 24 gallons of chopped clams, around 80 pounds of potatoes and 80 pounds of onions. The roux was made with 50 pounds of butter and 50 pounds of flour. Keep in mind, this was just the base. We added cream and milk to the base just before it went to the soup station to be served out of the steam table.

In the mid 1980's we began entering Chowder Competitions. We started at the station's annual "Chowdahfest" in Hyannis. I think we placed in the top three the first year and then we started winning - four years in a row after all was said and done. We started entering the Boston Chowderfest as well and won that grand prize three out of four years too. The winners were always voted by the general public. They would taste as much as they wanted and then they would vote by ballot . Now as I look out over a dining room of steaming bowls of chowder, I can't help but think of those teenage years of chowder making, a small pot at a time.

Tim's Clam Chowder:

Yield: Nine Cups

3 Tablespoons butter

³/₄ lb. onion, medium dice

¹/₂ lb. potatoes, medium dice

1 lb. large sweet sea clams, diced 3 cups clam juice, canned or jarred 2 cups fresh clam juice

¹/₂ teaspoon ground white pepper salt to taste, if needed

1¹/₂ cups milk

¹/₂ cup light cream

Roux: ³/₄ cup butter and 1 cup all purpose flour

Method:

1. In a soup pot, melt the butter and sauté onions until the onions are translucent. Do not brown.
2. Add the potatoes, clams, juices and pepper. Bring to a boil.
3. In a second pot (for the roux) melt the butter and with a wire whip, stir in the flour. Smooth with the whip. Cook on low heat while the other pot is coming to a boil.
4. After the first pot is boiling and the potatoes are cooked, stir in the roux. (Whenever a roux is added, it must be brought back to a boil or it will go rancid). So bring it back to a boil before removing from stove.
5. Heat the milk and cream on the side and then add to the chowder, or add enough hot chowder to the cold cream until the cream is the same temperature as the chowder base and then add it to the rest of the base. This is called "tempering."

Notes: When a stock or sauce is thickened with a roux, it must be cooled properly. Cool it on a rack of some sort. We put our big pots on milk crates until the soup is properly cooled and then we refrigerate it.