

NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER

4-6 ounces bacon, diced
1 very large onion, finely chopped
6 celery stalks, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/3 cup all purpose flour (OPTIONAL)
4 cups clam broth *see note
2 cups water
3-4 fresh sprigs thyme
2 bay leafs
2 lbs potatoes, diced (peeling optional)
freshly cracked black pepper to taste
1 1/2 cups finely chopped clams *see note
2 cups heavy cream
fresh parsley, chopped
salt as needed

Add the bacon to a large soup pot over medium-high heat and cook for about 10 minutes or until done and crispy.

Transfer the bacon to a plate with a slotted spoon and discard most of the fat, leaving about 1 tablespoon in the pot. Add the chopped onions and celery and cook for 8 minutes or until translucent. Add salt. Add the garlic and cook for 2 more minutes. *Stir in the flour for an additional minute.*

Add the clam juice, water, thyme, bay leaf, and potatoes. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce it to a simmer. Season with black pepper, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes or until the potatoes are tender.

Remove from the heat and stir in clams, bacon (reserve a little on the side for garnish), heavy cream. Taste and adjust seasoning as needed. Stir in fresh parsley.

Ladle into bowls and garnish with reserved bacon and more fresh parsley if desired.

*If using fresh clams, you'll need about 6 lbs of cherrystones to get 1 1/2 cups of meat. Steam them with a little bit of water until they just open, then remove them from the shells and chop/cut very finely. Strain and save the cooking liquid to use as the clam juice in the broth, but taste it first. If it is very salty, go easy on it and use more water instead.

Chop the clams up very finely. If too large of chunks are left, they can become rubbery as they continue to cook in the broth. SERVES 6-8