

Seafood

Blue Mussels

Blue mussels, (*Mytilus edulis*) are harvested year-round in the northeast and are most abundant April through October. These bivalves use byssal threads, often referred to as the mussel's "beard" to anchor themselves to rocks and pilings. Their elongated blue-black shells contain a succulent yellow to orange "meaty" flesh that makes mussels a favorite in red tomato or white wine sauce. The briny broth their juices create as they cook lends to their versatility in many recipes. Mussels may be steamed to get them out of their shells for grilling, frying, broiling on the half shell, or even for use in a cold salad.

Fresh mussels should be scrubbed clean with a stiff brush and refrigerated with their byssal threads intact in a bowl covered with a wet paper towel to maintain humidity. Never soak mussels in tap water as fresh water will kill them. Remove the byssal threads just before cooking. Test-tapping the mussel shell before cooking ensures its viability. If it doesn't close within a minute or two of tapping, it can be presumed dead and should be discarded.

— New York Seafood Council

Maxime's Moules-Frites (Mussels with Fried Potatoes)

Ingredients

For mussels with white wine

- 2 to 2.5 pounds of cleaned, fresh mussels
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- 4 ounces of unsalted butter
- 2 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 bay leaf
- large handful flat leaf parsley, chopped

Method

Heat half the butter in a large saucepan. When hot and foaming, add garlic, shallots, wine and bay leaf. Cook over a medium heat until shallots are soft and translucent. Bring the shallots and wine mixture to

a boil. Add mussels, cover the saucepan, and gently shake the pan and cook over a high heat for 2-3 minutes until the mussels open. Discard any mussels that remain closed after cooking. Use a colander to strain the mussels over a second saucepan. Transfer the mussels to a large bowl. Return the pan with the mussel liquor to the heat. Add parsley and remaining butter and bring to a boil. Pour the mixture over the mussels and serve immediately with fried potatoes. Bon appétit.

Maxime's hints for frying potatoes: Cut the potatoes in long rectangles (leave skins on for homemade appearance and flavor), soak them in hot, salty water for 10 minutes to remove excess starch, then wipe with paper towels. For traditional frites, first fry the potatoes in a moderately hot frying pan for 10-15 minutes (until a crust appears), then remove from pan. Fry a second time at a hotter temperature just before serving.

Likely to have originated in Flemish culture, "les moules-frites" is considered a classic national dish in both Belgium and northern France where Sea Grant Scholar Maxime Bridoux calls home. In Europe, the dish is often accompanied by a pale Belgian ale. Maxime recommends a similar ale from Brewery Ommegang in Cooperstown. Bridoux, a grad student at the University at Albany working under Katherine Alben, studies algal pigments in zebra mussels.



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