

Chef George Mendes' Bacalhau à Brás

Farm Egg, Salt Cod, Black Olives, and Crunchy Potatoes



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WINE PAIRING

Asnella Vinho Verde
Quinta de Saes Touriga Nacional
Maçanita Tinto

INGREDIENTS

Serves 4 people

- 1/4 cup of pitted Kalamata olives
- 1/2 cup of whole milk
- 1 fillet of Basic Salt Cod
- plus 3 oz, flaked
- To taste: kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tbsp of extra virgin olive-oil
- 1 small thinly sliced shallot
- 1 minced garlic clove
- 2 tbsp of fresh chopped parsley leaves
- 1/4 tsp of fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp of fried shoestring potatoes

OPTIONAL SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

- Siphon with two N₂O charges
- Egg cutter

BASIC SALT COD RECIPE

CHEF'S NOTES: "By curing salt cod yourself, you get the delicate sweetness of the fish under an intense savory richness and smooth-as-butter texture. It requires only two ingredients and a little patience and planning. Do it: It's a revelation."

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 lbs kosher salt

4 1/4 pounds whole skin-on cod filet

Four days before serving, spread 1/2 inch of the salt in a 6 inch deep container. Place the cod on top, skin side down, and cover it with the remaining salt, patting it against the top and sides of the fish. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 48 hours. Occasionally tip out excess moisture that's been released and evenly distribute the salt around the cod again.

To desalinate and use: Rinse the cod under cold running water, then rinse out the container. Return the cod to the container and cover it with cold water. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 2 to 3 days, changing the water every 16 hours. Because the saltiness of the fish can vary, I start tasting it after 2 days. I want a slight salinity and will drain the cod when it's where I want it. Remember that you'll be using the cod in other dishes that you'll season again, so you don't want it to be too salty. Drain the cod well and use immediately.

FRIED SHOESTRING POTATOES RECIPE

CHEF'S NOTES: "These crunchy thread-thin potatoes top my Bacalhau a Bras, but they're also an amazing snack on their own or on top of just about anything. You can easily make more. Just be sure to fry them in small batches to keep the potatoes crisp."

INGREDIENTS

1 small Yukon gold potato

Canola oil as needed

Fill a small saucepan with oil to a depth of 2 inches. Bring to 375 F over medium high heat. While the oil heats, peel the potato, then cut into scant 1/16 inch slices. Cut each slice into scant 1/16 inch shoestring batons. Rinse well with cold water; otherwise, excess starch will cause them to clump when frying. Dry well on paper towels.

Add the potatoes in batches to the hot oil to fry until golden brown and crisp, adjusting the heat to maintain the temperature and gently stirring to cook evenly. Drain on paper towels. Use immediately or store in an airtight container for up to 2 hours.

CHEF'S NOTES:

Classically, this is simply served in a mound. You can do that according to the variation below or try the refined version we serve at Aldea by layering the components in an eggshell (You need one of those cool egg cutters to make the serving cups). Be sure to use organic, free-range eggs, preferably from a local farm. To elevate the flavors and textures, I add a creamy espuma and dehydrated olives. Subtle, refined, and as satisfying as the original.

PREPARATION

Preheat the oven to 200°F (90°C). Place the olives on a parchment-lined half sheet pan and bake until totally dried and easy to crumble. Alternatively, use a dehydrator set at 145°F (62°C). Cool completely, then mince. You should have about 2 tablespoons.

In a small saucepan, bring the milk to a simmer over medium heat. Add the salt cod fillet, remove from the heat, and let stand for 30 minutes. Pour through a fine-mesh sieve, pushing hard to strain as much liquid as possible into a clean saucepan. Reserve the cod for another use. Season the milk with salt and pepper to taste and heat to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Immediately transfer to a siphon fitted with two N20 charges.

Use an egg cutter to carefully cut the tops off the eggs; reserve the shells and discard the tops (or see Variation). Pour the eggs into a small bowl and whisk well. Carefully peel off and discard the thin membranes inside the shells. Rinse the shells with warm water and let stand in the carton to dry.

Heat a medium nonstick pan over low heat and coat with the oil. Add the shallot and garlic and sweat, stirring occasionally, until translucent. Add the flaked cod and cook, stirring, for 15 seconds, then add the eggs and a few grindings of pepper. Cook, stirring constantly, until the eggs are just set but still wet. Fold in the parsley, lemon juice, and two-thirds of the olives and potatoes.

Use a small spoon to immediately and carefully divide the egg mixture among the four prepared eggshells. Siphon the milk mixture on top to come above the rim of the shell, then top with the remaining olives and potatoes. Serve immediately.

VARIATION

Omit the eggshell step. Siphon the salt cod milk onto serving plates and top with the egg mixture and garnishes.