

Spirited Seafood Bisque

Bisque gets its name from Biscay. Recipes require the seafood to be cooked in its shell first, then in cognac or wine and herbs before it is strained to deepen the flavor. Seafood bisque is a creamy, smooth, pureed soup usually made from shellfish broth that is strained. Do not confuse bisques and soups. A bisque is always a soup, but not all soups are bisques. It can contain cream, wine, and cognac, with spices. Seafood bisque can be made from lobster, crab, shrimp, scallops, mussels, or crawfish.

Bisque vs. Soup

Soups can be made from several different ingredients, such as meats, seafood, and vegetables. A bisque is mainly made from seafood/shellfish that is combined with vegetables. A thickened soup is usually thickened with flour, pasta, or potatoes, while a bisque is thickened with heavy cream. A bisque is made from seafood stock, and a cream soup is made from milk or cream. Bisques will always have a smooth, creamy texture. Bisques can be thickened with a roux or rice, while soups are thickened with flour or cornstarch.

Creamy Texture

To achieve the proper texture in a bisque, it's important to add dairy products like heavy cream or butter. These ingredients produce a velvety consistency in taste and texture.

Types of Bisques

There are several types of bisques. They range from Lobster and Crab to Tomato. Recipes suggest specific types of seafood based on their regional availability. Choose any fresh, high-quality seafood. Seafood bisque will have multiple types of seafood. Choose proteins that will complement the other ingredients. Tomato bisque is great for those who do not like seafood. It can also be made vegan by swapping out the chicken broth for vegetable broth. Substitute coconut cream for heavy cream to add richness without the lactose content of milk.

Tips

Generally, a seafood bisque recipe will follow these steps:

1. If possible, use fresh seafood. It imparts unbeatable flavors over frozen seafood. The possibilities are many when it comes to the types of fish or shellfish you can use.
2. Prep the chosen fish or shellfish as directed in the recipe or according to their type.
3. Mince aromatic vegetables, such as garlic and shallots. Saute them in a large pot with butter or oil over medium-low heat and cook until softened without burning it.
4. To create the roux, add the flour to the butter and vegetables and stir until the flour is well incorporated. Continue stirring for about two minutes until the roux thickens. Slowly add in hot stock, whisking to avoid lumps as the roux thickens.
5. Spices, herbs, and seasonings will add depth to the flavor profile. Add them as directed in the recipe and according to your preference.

6. Now that the bisque base is ready, add the fish/seafood and cook over low heat until it is cooked or warmed if previously cooked.
7. Stir in the heavy cream, wine, sherry, etc., and bring to a simmer on low heat.

Serve

Depending on the type of bisque being served will determine what goes best with it. Lobster bisque is best served with cornbread, gluten-free bread, a garden salad, baked Brie, or stuffed mushrooms. Potatoes go with crab bisque; either baked or roasted. Sweet potatoes also pair well with crab bisque. Shrimp bisque is a perfect match for no-knead bread. Tomato bisque goes il with cheese breadsticks or focaccia. Bisque can be served hot or cold, as a lunch or simple supper.

If you are a fan of seafood, chances are that you are going to love a bowl of seafood bisque! It will quickly become a mealtime staple.

(Sources: iamthaieatery.com; www.food.com; www.nospoonnecessary.com; themodernproper.com)