

Fond food memories of haute cuisine from my past

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Would you believe that wife Willi and I are downsizing? I will miss the incredible kitchen that we designed in which to host many exciting dinners over the last 13 years.

But it was time to face reality and get that cookbook completed. I have been working on it for a multitude of years. It also caused me to pack up the 650 cookbooks that I have gathered up and collected recipe ideas from for the last 70 years. I was about 13 when I started nosing through Grandma Sara Stratton's cooking notes. That was followed by many more delicious years of teaching classes and developing many of my own formulae to share with you kind readers. We actually did have the opportunity to extract quite a few right from the chefs when I was fortunate enough to dine at some pretty great beaneries around the USA, France, Wales, England and Italy. I should also mention the incredible classes I was able to attend at the CIA. That's not the Central Intelligence Agency. It is the Culinary Institute of America.

Fortunately I later learned about the great restaurant Chez Panisse Cafe which was Alice Waters' in Berkeley, Calif. Perfect because I was meeting up with two great friends there back in 2002. They were telling me how great their

oyster stew with thyme and fennel was. With the day's narrowing down now for the great bivalve to be available, I went that route and it was memorable. So here is my variation on it quick before we run out of months with an R in it.

It's thyme for oyster stew and fennel

Serves four People:
Gather the following:

Oysters, shucked, and liquor reserved. Dice up a ½ cup of shallots or onion, 1 small carrot, stalk of celery, fennel bulb ... all chopped up fine, 4 branches of fresh thyme. Saute all that in a

tbs of butter or oil about 5 minutes. Add one cup of heavy cream and simmer for 2 minutes, but don't boil. Add now the oysters and their liquor and cook for a minute or less. Taste the broth and add salt if necessary. They will cook very quickly. Now I like to add a teaspoonful of Pernod to enhance the fennel flavor. You might want to add the grated lemon. Be sure to ladle your creation into a heated bowl. You can garnish it with chopped chervil, cilantro and a little freshly ground pepper.

Bon appetit and we hope you enjoy it.