

Hog Island founder John Finger decreed that the New England-style clam chowder served at the restaurant needed to be like those he grew up with—including his mom’s—with no thickeners, unlike many versions of this dish that use a roux. Because of this, the flavor of the clams is allowed to sing. This creamy classic chowder is served with whole clams in the shell, and plenty of tender potatoes, buttery leeks, and bacon.

HOG ISLAND CLAM CHOWDER

6 pounds (2.7 kg) small Manila clams in the shell, scrubbed (page 32)

8 to 10 (3 pounds/1.4 kg) Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-size cubes

2 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 sprigs fresh thyme

½ pound (225 g) thick-sliced bacon, diced

2 large leeks, white part only, thinly sliced and well rinsed

½ small stalk celery, thinly sliced

1 large carrot, peeled and thinly sliced

4 cups (960 ml) heavy cream

Kosher salt and freshly cracked pepper

Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, for garnish

Warm crusty bread, for serving

After scrubbing the clams, allow them to drain in the colander in the sink while you prepare the base.

In a large, heavy stockpot, bring 5 to 6 cups (1.2 to 1.4 l) of water to a low boil and cook the potatoes until al dente, or just before fork-tender, about 8 minutes. Drain, reserving the cooking water.

In the stockpot, melt the butter with the thyme over low heat. Add the bacon and cook until it has rendered its fat. Add the leeks, celery, and carrot and cook, stirring, until the vegetables are just beginning to brighten in color, about 3 minutes. Add the potatoes and 4 cups (960 ml) of the cooking water, reserving the rest of the cooking water for other soups or to thin the chowder. (The chowder base can be cooled, covered, and refrigerated for up to 2 days at this stage. Rewarm the refrigerated base before proceeding.)

Increase the heat to medium and add the clams to the stockpot. Cover and simmer until the clams open, 5 to 6 minutes. Pick out and discard any clams that have not opened. (Don't skip this step—unopened clams may spoil the chowder.)

Add the cream and bring the chowder to a simmer. If it is too thick, add some of the reserved potato water. Season to taste with salt. When the chowder is bubbling in the center, it is ready.

Serve garnished with cracked pepper and parsley, with the bread for dipping. Place extra bowls on the table for the discarded shells. **SERVES 6 TO 8**

