

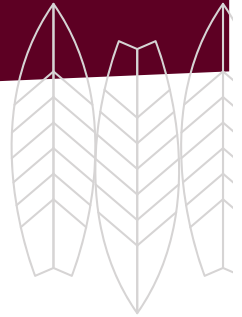
Arum Nixon's Mussels Cooked in Beer

Mussels are one of life's simple pleasures. With some warm crusty bread to dip in the sauce, it's hard to beat them as winter comfort food. I've used dark beer instead of the more traditional wine, but I think this twist is well worth a try, the flavours seem made for each other. It's also a good excuse to try some of the beers from your local brewery – make sure it's a good quality one for this recipe.



Arum Nixon's

Mussels Cooked in Beer



Ingredients

- 30g butter
- 4 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 small bunch thyme
- 150ml good quality dark beer
- 2kg mussels, cleaned
- 150ml crème fraîche
- Salt to taste
- Crusty bread, to serve

Method

1. Melt the butter in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the shallots and fry, stirring, for 5–6 minutes until softened. Add the peppercorns, bay leaves, 2–3 sprigs of the thyme and the beer to the pan and bring to the boil, stirring well to combine.
2. Carefully tip the mussels into the pan, cover with the lid, and increase the heat to high. Cook for 4–5 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally.
3. Open the lid of the pan, watching out for the steam, and remove all opened mussels to a dish and reserve. Return any unopened mussels to the heat, covered, for another 1–2 minutes, and add to the others – discarding any that are unopened by this stage.
4. Remove the bay leaf and thyme sprigs from the liquid and continue to cook over a high heat until reduced to one third. Stir in the crème fraîche and picked leaves of the remaining thyme. Check the seasoning.
5. Pour the juices back over the mussels and serve with the crusty bread.

Tips and Tricks

- It's important that all the mussels are tightly closed before cooking. If any are slightly open, tap them lightly against the bench – they should snap shut. Discard any that are still open. Likewise, any that haven't opened at the end of cooking, don't ever be tempted to prize them open, just discard them.
- Never over-cook mussels, they'll be tough and tasteless. To avoid over-cooking, keep an eye on them and remove any as soon as they open. A glass lid to your pan is really helpful here so you can see as soon as they're ready. Also use a wide pan so that the steam can evenly reach them all, and don't forget to shake the pan to ensure they all cook through.

Serves 4

