

Wood-Roasted Chipotle Oysters

From Charlie Palmer's American Fare Cookbook

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

3 dozen oysters

Rock salt (see Note)

Chipotle Butter (recipe follows)

½ cup fresh breadcrumbs

METHOD

If you are lucky enough to have one, build a hot fire in a wood-fired oven; alternatively, preheat a charcoal grill to high or preheat the oven to 400°F.

Using a still kitchen scrub brush, scrub each oyster under cold running water to clean thoroughly.

Line 2 shallow baking dishes (we use a 6-quart Staub cocotte or casserole) or rimmed baking sheets with a ½-inch layer of rock salt. Set aside.

Place an even layer of the salt on a serving platter large enough to hold the oysters. This will be used to serve the oysters. Set aside.

Place a thick glove on your nondominant hand and an oyster-shucking knife in your dominant hand. Working with one oyster at a time, place it in the palm of your gloved hand and hold on to it. With the oyster level with the shucking knife, insert the tip of the knife between the shell next to the hinge at the back. Using the knife as leverage, twist into the shell to pry it apart. You will hear a sharp noise as the shell opens. Do not force it open or the shell will crack. Holding the oyster firmly and evenly, gently twist the knife to open the shell entirely. Still keeping the bottom shell level (you don't want to lose any of the juice), cut the muscle at the hinge to detach and loosen the oyster from the bottom shell. Discard the top shell.

Nestle the oyster half-shell into the salt on a prepared baking sheet and continue opening oysters until all are open.

When all the oysters have been opened, place a slice of Chipotle Butter on top of each one and sprinkle with breadcrumbs.

No matter which cooking method you use, keep the oysters on the salt-lined baking sheet and transfer to the preheated oven or grill. Quickly cover the grill. Bake or grill for about 7 minutes or until the oysters are curling slightly, the butter has melted, and the breadcrumbs are golden and crisp. In either case, you don't want to lose any of the oyster liquor as the butter melts into it, creating a delicious sauce.

Transfer the roasted oysters to the salt-lined serving platter and serve, 6 per person, piping hot.

Note: If you don't have rock salt or can't find it, you can use an equal amount of coarse or kosher salt.

Chipotle Butter

Makes 1½ cups

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature

4 chipotle chiles in adobo, stemmed and seeded

2 tablespoons lemon juice

½ teaspoon ground cumin

Salt and cayenne pepper

METHOD

Combine the butter, chiles, lemon juice, cumin, salt, and cayenne in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade and process to thoroughly blend.

Using a rubber spatula, scrape the butter mixture into the center of a piece of plastic wrap (or waxed paper). Fold the wrap over the butter and, using your hands, form the butter into a neat log about 1½ inches in diameter. Tightly close the ends of the plastic wrap and transfer the log to the refrigerator. Chill for at least 1 hour or until firm, or freeze for up to 3 months.

When ready to use, unwrap the log and cut the butter, crosswise, into ¼-inch thick slices. Use as directed.