

Enjoy This Recipe Courtesy of Chef Les Kincaid

Mediterranean Seafood Salad

To make the scrumptious dressing for this typically Mediterranean salad, the shellfish cooking liquid is combined with olive oil. If you like this salad, try embellishing it with octopus, langoustines or chunks of firm-textured fish.

1/2 cup plus 1 tablespoon pure olive oil
1 large onion, finely diced
4 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves picked
1 tablespoon fresh garlic
3 pounds fresh mussels, cleaned and drained
2 cups dry white wine
40 clams, shells washed (top or middle neck size)
2 pounds peeled rock shrimp or medium peeled shrimp
2 pounds squid, cleaned, bodies cut into 1/2-inch rings, tentacles left whole and uncut
1 cup capers, drained
3 large red bell peppers, oven roasted and sliced
1 1/2 cups imported Greek or Italian olives, pitted
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil, for dressing
1 head romaine lettuce or other coarse greens, leaves washed and dried, shredded

Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in an 8-quart pot. Add the onion, thyme and garlic and cook over high heat for 1 minute, until softened. Add the mussels and wine and shake the pan. Cover and cook over high heat until the mussels begin to open, approximately 2 to 3 minutes. When they are all open, pour the mussels and the cooking liquid into a colander set over a large bowl. Set the mussels aside and return the liquid to the pot. *See note.*

Add the clams to the pot and cook them over high heat until they open, approximately 4 to 5 minutes. Strain, as you did the mussels. Set the clams aside, reserving the cooking liquid.

Heat 1/2 cup of the olive oil in a skillet. Add the shrimp and sauté quickly over high heat for approximately 2 minutes, until just pink. With a skimmer, transfer the shrimp to a large bowl. Sauté the squid in the same oil over high heat, approximately 2 minutes. Add to the bowl with the shrimp and toss in the capers, bell peppers, and olives.

Remove the mussels and clams from their shells and add to the bowl. Pour the cooking liquid into a small saucepan and reduce by half over high heat. Season with freshly ground black pepper. Whisk in the extra-virgin olive oil and blend to make a dressing. Let cool, and then toss into the seafood salad. Just before serving, add the lettuce and toss.

Note: Discard any mussels or clams that do not open with the others.

Planning ahead: The seafood can be cooked, and the salad (without the lettuce or dressing) assembled, up to 2 days ahead and kept in the refrigerator. Add the lettuce and dressing 1-hour before serving.

Yield: 20 buffet portions