

BRANDADE: SALT COD PUREE

PAIR WITH ESTATE CHARDONNAY

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INGREDIENTS

Sections of wild fennel stalk,
or a pinch of fennel seeds

- 1 bay leaf
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 3 cups water
- 1 pound salt cod, soaked
(see recipe)
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons milk

Thin slices of baguette,
partially dried in a slow
oven or in the sun and
rubbed lightly with garlic

INSTRUCTIONS

You may try to find fully salted cod or salt the cod yourself. Good salt cod is filleted but not skinned before salting. If buying a section of fillet, avoid the tip of the tail and the abdominal flaps. The best part lies directly behind the abdomen. It may require anywhere from 24 to 36 hours soaking in repeated changes of cold water, preferably placed skin side up in the colander immersed in a large basin. If knowledgeable, check with your merchant on specific soaking times. When it is ready, it will have doubled in volume and noticeably whitened. We recommend including the skin, whose gelatinous content binds the puree while lending it a soft, voluptuous texture.

Combine the fennel, bay leaf, garlic, and water in a saucepan, bring to a boil, and simmer, covered for 30 minutes. Strain the court-bouillon and leave it to cool. Place the salt cod, skin side down, in a saucepan just large enough to contain it, pour over the cold court-bouillon, and if necessary to completely immerse the cod, add some cold water. Bring slowly to a boil, cover the pan tightly, turn off the heat, and leave it to poach in the cooling liquid for 15 minutes. Remove the fish, drain it, and pick it over, removing any bones, flaking the flesh and tearing the skin to pieces.

In a food processor, process the flesh and skin for a few seconds. In a small pan, heat about 1 tablespoon of olive oil until very hot. At the same time, add the milk to a small saucepan to warm. Add the hot olive oil to the fish, process, and warm the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil to hot but not smoking, and whirl in about 2 tablespoons. Add about 2 tablespoons hot milk and, if necessary, a little more olive oil and milk until the puree is creamy and consistent, neither too firm nor too loose. Spread it on the garlic croutons and serve warm.



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