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Clambake!

By Susie Iventosch



Clambake Photo Susie Iventosch

Clambakes are becoming more and more popular on the west coast. The traditional clambake, which originated on the east coast, is an all-day affair, starting with the building of a fire on the beach, heating the rocks to just the right temperature, digging for clams and harvesting seaweed for wrapping the food while cooking it over the hot rocks! Often "clambakers" will serve clam chowder on the side, or as a first course.

"In New England the clambake goes with summer as much as grilling burgers does at a BBQ," said Elaine Smit of Chow Bella. "The clambake is an easy casual way of entertaining outdoors for large gatherings with friends and family. The clambake is becoming increasingly popular here in California."

According to Smit, a clambake can be held at the beach or anywhere you can start a fire. The tradition of the clambake began with the Native Americans and dates back to the days of the first European settlers. They were taught by the Native Americans how to steam clams, corn, potatoes and others things in a hole in the ground.

While the beach is the ideal location for a clambake, it can also be prepared in a huge pot over the stove, or on the barbecue, for inlanders. The clambake usually consists of corn, onions, potatoes, cherrystone or littleneck clams, and can include lobster, chickens, sausages and eggs.

I'd heard of a clambake for years, perhaps it was from listening to "A Real Nice Clambake" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's Carousel, but I'd never prepared or partaken in one. So, it was really fun to try it on my family last weekend. Since the only beach we have at our house is a sand volleyball court with lots of weeds, but no seaweed, we opted to cook our clambake over the barbecue. The meal was delicious! We all enjoyed the combination of seafood, sausage and veggies cooked together in a personal little packet for each person. We made a little extra basting sauce with melted butter, wine, garlic and parsley and this was perfect for passing around the table!

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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