

Dining • Dining • Dining • Dining • Dining • Dining •

Clambake!

By 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 other 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, cherry-stone 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!

Chow Bella's Clambake Recipe

(Serves 4) The traditional method for throwing a clambake is to start by digging a hole in the ground. Cover the bottom of the hole with large stones and build a large, hot fire on top of the stones. This fire needs to burn for a couple of hours to heat those stones as hot as they can get. In the meantime you can prepare the food. A clambake consists of a lot of food, most importantly fresh clams. Typically the menu will include (but may also include regional or seasonal substitutions):

- 4 fresh ears of corn, shucked
1 pound smoked sausage, cut into 4 pieces
12 very small (one-inch in diameter) new potatoes, cut in half
8 small to medium onions, peeled, and cut in half
4 (1 3/4-pound) lobsters
24 little neck clams, scrubbed

For serving: 1 cup unsalted butter, melted
2 lemons, cut into wedges
Serve with clam chowder

You will also need enough seaweed or rock weed to cover the fire pit and plenty of cheesecloth. Wire baskets are also helpful to hold everything together. Wrap individual servings of the above ingredients in cheesecloth, tying the corners together and place in baskets if you have them.

Once the rocks are hot enough to spit a drop of water back at you, rake off the coals from the fire and cover the rocks with seaweed. Place the food packets on the seaweed and cover with more seaweed. It's then best to cover the whole project with a large tarpaulin. After about 2 hours everything should be done. Serve with lemon and melted butter.

That's how you hold a traditional clambake. Since most of us don't live on a beach or



Clambake Photo Susie Iventosch

want to dig a hole in our backyard this meal can be made on the grill or in a large pot.

How would you do this in the pot? Arrange corn, sausage, potatoes, and onions in a steamer basket over boiling water in a Dutch oven. Top with lobsters and clams. Cover and steam 20 minutes. Serve with butter and lemon.

How would you do this on a charcoal grill? Lay out two pieces of foil with two pieces of the cheesecloth on top. Wrap this around 1 corn, 1 piece of sausage, 6 potatoes, 2 small onions, 1 lobster, 6 little neck clams, and some seaweed or rockweed -- if you were able to find it -- add a cup of water to the package. Make sure to tie the cloth over the food and seal the foil well.

Make 4 of these packages and place them on a barbecue grill about 4 inches from the heat.

Cover the grill with the hood or with large pieces of foil tucked in around the edges of the grill.

Let the packages steam for 1 hour flipping them every 15 minutes. If the potatoes are done, it's a good indication that the lobster and the rest of the ingredients are ready too. (Note, my packets cooked in about 30 minutes, so the cooking time will vary with each barbecue. It's best to take one of the packets to test from time to time to see if the potatoes are cooked.)

The recommended dessert for a Clambake is a Whoopie Pie. Whoopie pies are considered a New England phenomenon and a Pennsylvania tradition. They're one of Maine's best known and most loved comfort foods. They accompany most New England clambakes but are not a staple of Chow Bella.

COME TO LUNCH AT PETAR'S
Petar's lunch menu includes a variety of homemade soups, salads, sandwiches, including great burgers, pasta, seafood, and more!
Lunch Special
Take \$5.00 off the purchase of two regular lunch entrees of \$7.95 or more (each).

Father's Day June 21st
Buffet Brunch 8 am - 2 pm
Eggs Benedict, Bacon, Sausage, Home Fries, Waffles, Pancakes, Fresh Fruit, Assorted Pastries and Breads, Salads, Pasta, Carving Station with Leg of Lamb and Mint Chutney, Omelet Station, Desserts
Special Dinner Menu 4:30 - 8:30 pm
Prime Rib, Rack of Lamb, Salmon, Mahi-Mahi, Ahi Tuna, Chicken Parmesan

KIRIN SUSHI Japanese Restaurant
Best Sushi in California
Sushi Sam, Owner-Chef
20 years experience
natural rice • guaranteed fresh
356 Park Street, Moraga
(376) 287-2872



Take Dad out for Father's Day Sunday, June 21st

KNOX RESTAURANT • LOUNGE
ITALIAN COMFORT FOOD
WEEKEND BRUNCH @
KNOX RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE
STARTING JUNE 13 TH 2009
FROM 9 AM- 2.30 PM
20% OFF ON BRUNCH CHECK FOR THE 13TH AND 14 TH JUNE ONLY
FREE PARKING
CALL FOR RESERVATIONS 925-284-5225
3576 MT. DIABLO BLVD., LAFAYETTE, WWW.THEKNOX.COM

SICILIAN RESTAURANT
Dinner for 2 \$22.00*
(regular up to \$29.90)
Includes your choice of any two entrees priced up to \$14.95 * each
Add on for items priced over \$14.95
Charming La Finestra is well worth seeking out SF Chronicle -Bill Staggs
100 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette
(925) 284-5282
www.lafinestraristorante.com

MILLIE'S Kitchen
5 AM - 2:30 PM Seven Days a Week
Father's Day June 21st Bring your Dad to Millie's for breakfast!
1018 Oak Hill Road, Lafayette
(510) 283-2397

Table listing various restaurants in the Lamorinda area, including American, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, and others, with their addresses and phone numbers.

The Lamorinda Weekly (LW) Restaurant Guide is not paid advertising; our intent is to provide a useful reference guide. We hope that we have included all Lamorinda restaurants on this page, except those that told us they did not wish to be listed. LW is not liable for errors or omissions. In the event that we have inadvertently printed misinformation or excluded a restaurant please let us know (info@lamorindaweekly.com) so that we may correct our list for the next issue.