

Celeriac and black garlic soup, with scallops and potato crisps



By Roel Sanders of Restaurant 55, Maastricht

This is a perfect flavoursome soup for those who like traditional French flavours, but with a twist. Black garlic has been fermented into a delicious, liquorish like sweetness. Nowadays, also available in the local grocery store, but not a lot of home cooks know what to do with it or how to use it. This is an easy way to get acquainted with this umami packed little guy!

*See below the recipe for some information on buying and preparing the scallops.

Another tip; read the whole recipe before you start cooking! It's easier to know what you will be doing before you start.

For the soup

Ingredients to serve 4:

- 1 Celeriac
- 1 small shallot
- 5 cloves of black garlic
- 100ml white wine
- 100ml cream
- 100ml crème fraiche
- 1 lemon
- 12 scallops
- 1 spring onion
- 1 waxy potato
- Olive oil
- Salt and Pepper
- Cress or green herbs to garnish

1) Peel and dice the celeriac and shallot. Take off the skin with a knife and cut into cubes. No need to be precise, just make sure they're roughly the same size. Remove the garlic cloves from their jackets.

Now, there are more ways to get to your end result, for an extra smokey flavour, you can grill the celeriac cubes on a BBQ before boiling them. If you want a nutty flavour, fry them in a pan before boiling them. For a clean flavour, just add to the soup liquid after adding the wine.

2) Pour some olive oil into a pan and add the diced shallot and the garlic cloves. Fry them for 2 or 3 minutes, season with some salt and pepper and add the white wine. At this point you can add your celeriac, either grilled, fried or raw. Top up with water until it's just covered. Cook the soup for about 20 minutes until the celeriac is tender.

3) Pour the mixture into a blender, add the cream and the crème fraiche (reserve a little bit for garnishing) and blend it to a silky smooth soup. For extra smoothness, add a cube of cold butter. Now you can add some lemon juice and lemon zest to freshen it up a little.

Season to taste.

For the potato crisps

Simply cut the potato into little cubes (about 5mm), rinse them off with some water, dry them and fry them in olive oil until they turn golden brown and crispy, make sure you keep stirring them so they won't stick together. Put them on a piece of kitchen paper so the oil drains off and add a little salt.

Slice the spring onion into super-thin rings.

To finish your dish, fry the scallops in some olive oil in a hot pan. Leave them to get crispy and brown on one side (be patient!), and turn them over for just a few seconds before taking them out. Season with salt and pepper.

Take a deep bowl or soup dish, put the scallops in the centre of the dish. Pour the soup around it, and garnish with the green herbs or cress, spring onion and potato crisps. Now add a little dollop of crème fraiche and sprinkle around some olive oil to finish it off!

Bon Appetit!

** Scallops, try to get them fresh, but frozen will work just fine. It is best to get them inside the shell, but it does take some tricks to get the meat out. Take the shell into your left hand inside a kitchen towel (for lefties into your right) flat side up. Take a small knife and wiggle your way into the crack between the bottom and top, just next to the little hinge. Then twist the knife so the shell opens, and gently but firmly run your knife along the top shell. Make sure you press against the top so the meat doesn't get sliced in half. Next you can take out the insides, and pull out the white clean meat. If you use scallops that are already cleaned, make sure the little muscle on the side is taken off, this gets a little tough when cooked! If you need more explanation on opening scallops, watch a video on youtube, there are lots around.*