

Pistachio Clam Sauce

6 medium to large clams
1-½ Tbls light olive oil
2 large cloves of garlic
3 Tbls pistachios, finely chopped – 30 nuts
3 Tbls butter
½ cup chicken stock
1-½ Tbls cornstarch
1 cup of freshly grated parmesan cheese
salt
white pepper

Mince clams and finely chop or crush garlic. Sauté clams in olive oil until most of the tissue liquid has been cooked away and the edges begins to brown. Add garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Cook mixture until garlic just begins to brown. Add butter and nuts. As soon as the butter has melted, add cornstarch dissolved in chicken stock, and stir constantly for at least five minutes for the cornstarch to cook thoroughly. Add more chicken stock if required to thin sauce to desired consistency, but do not thin so much it puddles in the plate rather than coat the pasta.

Pour clam sauce over your favorite pasta (well drained) and toss with parmesan (best with fresh Reggiano but pecorino or romano will do) cheese. Makes enough sauce for one and one-half cups of uncooked mini-penné, two cups of medium pasta shells, or six ounces of linguini. Makes two large servings. If multiplying the recipe for a larger group, use only enough light olive oil to properly sauté the clams and garlic.

Note that this recipe can be very successfully varied by substituting one and one-half cups of

chopped bay scallops or one cup of shrimp for the clams. You can also change the nuts to walnuts, pine nuts, pecans, or almonds.

This dish calls for a heavy-duty chardonnay, a light pinot noir, or a dry grenache to match up with the pungent flavor of the clams. It can also stand a little sweetness if you like slightly sweet wines like a riesling. The variations will do well with these same wines except for the walnuts, which really need one of the recommended reds.