

ELMER DILLS'S CLAM CHOWDER

The late Elmer Dills was the Restaurant Critic and Good Life Editor for ABC TV in Los Angeles until his untimely death¹ in 2008 . I had the pleasure of sharing a favorite oasis spot, Stoney Point Restaurant in Pasadena, with him and his wife Lynn, on frequent occasions before my moving from that area to Carlsbad in 2000.

As a critic, he often complained that New England clam chowder was not prepared correctly in most of the many restaurants he reviewed in his 30 year career. He despised the practice of adding flour or cornstarch as a thickener.

He once gave me a copy of his 1998-revised version of his "Authentic New England Clam Chowder" recipe, simplified for home preparation. It appears below.

- 1 lb white rose potatoes, unpeeled, chopped into ½" cubes**
- 3 oz salt pork with rind removed, chopped finely (or 4 oz bacon)**
- 3 tbsp fresh thyme leaves (or 1 tbsp dried)**
- 3 tbsp butter (no substitute! he insisted)**
- 1¾ cups half milk and half cream (for thicker chowder use heavy cream)**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 2 (8-oz) cans whole baby clams with liquid**
- 3 bay leaves**
- "salt" and pepper to taste**

Sauté the salt pork or bacon with onions until onions are translucent but not brown, about 3 minutes over high heat. Reduce heat to medium. Add clam broth, potatoes, thyme, and bay leaves and cook until potatoes are tender, about 15-20 minutes. Add butter and milk and cream, heat to the point just before it comes to a boil, add "salt" and pepper to taste, and serve.

¹<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/sep/17-/local/me-passings17>

SALMON CREAM SOUP ‡

We live within walking distance of a little village within Carlsbad, CA, known as Bressi Ranch, where we often dine in *Tommy V's Urban Kitchen*. One cold (for Southern California) December evening we decided to have their *soup du jour* to give our meal a warm start. It was so good that we wanted to ask them for their recipe.

However, we decided that we could probably duplicate it on our own. Still sipping, we wrote down what we thought it contained. We were certainly not disappointed by our later recreation, captured in the recipe below.

This dish is meant to be a pre-entrée course. It is probably a little too light to serve as a main course, unless perhaps accompanied by a sandwich. For an entrée soup, see.²

- ¼ cup onion, chopped**
- ¼ cup celery, chopped**
- ¼ cup carrot, chopped**
- 1 tbsp "butter"**
- 1 ½ cup fish stock**
- ½ tsp "salt" (depending on fish stock)**
- 1 tsp dried tarragon**
- 1 bay leaf**
- 1 ½ cup nonfat half-and-half**
- 2 oz salmon (or other fish), cooked and flaked**
- 2 tbsp scallions**
- 2 tsp sherry (optional)**

Cook the first three ingredients in the "butter" until the onion begins to brown to make a *mirepoix*. Add the fish stock, "salt" (if needed), tarragon, and bay leaf, bring to a simmer, and let simmer for 15 minutes. Add the half-and-half, bring again to a simmer, and let simmer another 15 minutes.

Remove the bay leaf and liquify the soup using a hand blender for about 1 or 2 minutes,

²*Root Vegetable Soup*, page 79.

until smooth. Add the fish and mix well. Ladle into serving bowls, add the sherry, if you wish, and top each with a tablespoon of scallions. Serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings.