

**SERVES 8**

Nutrition Facts (with croutons): 240 calories, 9g fat, 3g saturated fat, 580 mg sodium, 28g carbohydrates, 3g fiber, 14g protein

NEW ENGLAND CLAM CHOWDER

Ingredients

8 pounds fresh clams, in shells
(or ~1 ½ cups clam meat)
4 bacon slices, chopped
1 Tablespoon olive oil
3 celery stalks, minced
(reserve leaves for garnish)
1 large onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
1 pound red or Yukon gold potatoes,
diced in ¼ inch pieces
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped
1 bay leaf
3 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups 2% reduced-fat milk
½ cup half-and-half
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
Juice of ½ lemon

Whole Wheat Croutons

4 slices whole wheat bread, cut into 1 inch cubes
1 tablespoon olive oil
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons fresh thyme

Directions

1. In large pot over high heat, bring 4 cups of water and clams to a boil. Cook until clams are slightly open, 3-5 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer clams to a large plate and allow to cool. Discard any clams that do not open. Pull clam meat from shells and chop any large clams into bite size pieces, and discard shells. Refrigerate clams until ready to use in chowder.
2. Strain clam cooking liquid through a fine mesh strainer over a large bowl. Add water if needed to get 6 cups total. Set broth aside.
3. Over medium-high heat, cook bacon in large heavy pot stirring constantly until it begins to brown, about 2-3 minutes. Lower heat to medium, add 1 Tablespoon olive oil, cook celery and onion and cook for about 2-3 minutes, until vegetables begin to soften. Add garlic, salt, and pepper, and cook another 2 minutes (do not allow garlic to brown). Add reserved broth, potatoes, thyme, and bay leaf. Simmer about 15-20 minutes until potatoes are tender. In small bowl, stir together cornstarch and 3 tablespoons water to form a slurry. Stir slurry into soup. Return soup to a boil.
4. Set heat to medium-low. Discard bay leaf. Stir in reserved clams, milk, and half-and-half. Season with salt and pepper and add lemon juice. Cook 5 minutes more.
5. While chowder cooks, make croutons. Preheat oven (or use toaster oven) to 375 degrees. Toss bread cubes with olive oil, pepper and thyme. Place in single layer on baking sheet and bake for 5-8 minutes, until golden brown.
6. Serve chowder warm, garnished with croutons and additional celery leaves, if desired.