

Shellfish and Tomato Stew

The last of four easy-enough recipes by Yotam Ottolenghi



By
Kitty Greenwald

Yotam Ottolenghi's way with vegetables has earned him international acclaim. At Ottolenghi, his London-based empire of prepared-food shops, dishes like pistachio-crusting tuna and lamb kebabs with sorrel-yogurt sauce are popular, but a grain salad with squash blossoms and dried lime and the grilled peaches with endive and blue cheese possess even

broader appeal, tempting carnivores and vegetarians alike.

In 2006, Mr. Ottolenghi began writing a popular newspaper column called *The New Vegetarian*. Yet, despite his talent for creating enticing meat-free recipes, he has never considered himself a poster child for the vegetarian vanguard. Indeed, to the chagrin of some readers,

Mr. Ottolenghi once devoted a column to fattoush, a Middle Eastern bread salad, only to suggest grilled lamb chops as the perfect accompaniment.

Still, while not a vegetarian himself, Mr. Ottolenghi said he believes vegetable-heavy dishes can more than satisfy, especially when seasoned well and bulked up with nuts, grains, fresh cheese, eggs or thick, garlicky yogurt. "I enjoy meat," he said, "but I can do without it."

What he can't do without is good produce. Mr. Ottolenghi, 42, believes palates are formed during childhood, and in his case, Israeli greengrocers, their stalls loaded with apricots, figs, eggplants, cucumbers and more, left an indelible mark on the Jerusalem-born chef. Though Mr. Ottolenghi's column recently expanded to include fish and meat recipes, an emphasis on seasonal produce runs through all his dishes.

For his final Slow Food Fast contribution, Mr. Ottolenghi shares a quick shellfish stew recipe that showcases summer tomatoes, salty feta and sweet-briny shellfish. The dish, based on a Greek recipe he and Sami Tamimi,

Ottolenghi's executive chef, first made together years ago, is one of his favorites.

Clam juice and reduced wine lend the tomato sauce body and imbue it with what Mr. Ottolenghi called "the flavor of the sea." Simmering the sauce for an extended period, with lemon peel and fresh oregano thrown in, both thickens it and deepens the flavor. Unlike a runny tomato sauce, he said, this version should be tight and drop heavily from a spoon. The seafood will release just enough liquid to loosen the sauce when stirred in at the end.

Feta cheese, while unexpected in a Mediterranean-inspired fish stew, imparts what Mr. Ottolenghi described as a clean, "sexy flavor." Nestled in before broiling, its salty bite awakens the palate. If fresh tomatoes are out of season, canned are a fine substitute, Mr. Ottolenghi said. He also added that when fresh tomatoes are especially sweet, additional sugar is not necessary.

Serve Mr. Ottolenghi's dish with crusty bread to sop up the juices, as a robust starter or as a light main course. If the bread is grilled and drizzled with olive oil, even better.

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TOTAL TIME: 30 minutes

SERVES: 2-4

3/4	cup	white wine
1 1/4	pounds	clams
2	Tablespoons	olive oil, plus extra to finish
2	cloves	garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
1	teaspoon	tomato paste
1	pound	ripe tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch dice
1/2	teaspoon	sugar

1	Tablespoon	fresh oregano, roughly chopped
1/2	teaspoon	salt, plus extra to taste
		freshly ground pepper, to taste
1		lemon
6	ounces	large scallops
7	ounces	large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2	ounces	feta, crumbled
1		scallion, outer layer removed and sliced thin on bias

1. Set medium pot fitted with lid over medium-high heat. Add wine and reduce for 2 minutes, or until its original volume. Meanwhile, set fine mesh strainer over small bowl.
2. Add clams to pot and cover with lid. Shaking pot occasionally, cook 3-4 minutes, or until all clams open. Pour contents through strainer, separating clams from cooking liquid.
3. Set 10-inch oven-proof skillet over medium heat. Stir in olive oil and garlic and cook 1 minute, or until garlic turns golden. Add tomato paste and cook 30 seconds, stirring constantly so garlic does not burn.
4. Add tomatoes, clam cooking liquid, sugar, oregano, teaspoon salt and pepper to pan. Using a vegetable peeler, remove 2 long strips of zest from lemon and add to pan. Simmer 15-17 minutes, or until sauce thickens. Season with salt and pepper to taste. While sauce simmers, preheat broiler and remove of clams from shells.
5. Stir scallops into sauce and cook 1 minute. Remove from heat, stir in shelled clams and shrimp, and scatter feta and scallions over top. Nestle clams in shells into sauce.
6. Transfer pan to oven and broil 3-5 minutes, or until shrimp and scallops are just cooked through.
7. To serve, squeeze tablespoon lemon juice over top. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil.



THE CHEF: Yotam Ottolenghi

HIS RESTAURANTS: Four Ottolenghi café (in London's Notting Hill, Islington, Kensington and Belgravia) and sleek, convivial Nopi, in Soho

WHAT HE'S KNOWN FOR: Elevating take-out and vegetarian fare to new heights with Middle Eastern flavors and an artistic sensibility.