

LEISURE

Food & Drink

Lobster duo: Luxury on the cheap

Lobster prices are as low as they've been in years, said Melissa Clark in *The New York Times*. So the "only sensible thing to do" is to run to the fish store and pick up a couple of bargain crustaceans. The reason for the low prices? Lobstermen recently have been making record catches, and until last fall the excess "was funneled to Canadian processing plants" that sold them to chain restaurants. But the sinking economy has forced such plants to shut down. At least temporarily, "that means cheaper lobsters for you and me." Traditional boiled lobster served with melted butter is hard to improve upon, but here are two recipes if you're willing to experiment—now that you can afford to.

Recipes of the week

Sautéed Lobster With Oyster Mushrooms and Ginger

3 tbsp peanut or safflower oil
2 inches ginger, peeled and finely chopped
1 fat garlic clove, finely chopped
6 oz oyster mushrooms, sliced
2 oz maitake or shiitake mushrooms, sliced
½ cup sliced scallions, white and light green parts only
Two 1¼–1½ lb boiled or steamed lobsters, meat removed and cut into bite-size pieces
½ cup chicken stock
1 tbsp soy sauce, more to taste
2 tsp rice wine vinegar, more to taste
1½ tsp sesame oil
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
Cooked rice, for serving (optional)

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high



Lobster with Cajun butter: Crack open and cook

heat. Add ginger and garlic; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in mushrooms and scallions; cook, tossing occasionally, until soft and golden, about 4 minutes. Stir in lobster, stock, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil. Cook until most of liquid has evaporated, 2 to 3 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings. Stir in cilantro; serve immediately, over rice if you like. Serves 4.

Broiled Lobster With Cajun Butter

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted
1 tbsp kosher salt
1½ tsp cayenne pepper
1½ tsp paprika
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
¾ tsp onion powder
¾ tsp dried thyme
½ tsp garlic powder
½ tsp dried oregano
⅓ tsp mustard powder
4 live lobsters, about 1½ lbs each

Preheat broiler. Arrange oven rack 4 inches from heat source. To make Cajun butter, stir together all ingredients except lobsters in small bowl. Place lobsters in bag in freezer for 15 minutes to slow their metabolism. Place a lobster on its back. Using sharp knife and quick movement, slice lobster in half lengthwise from head to tip of tail. Grab both sides of shell and split open body, cracking through its hard back. Scoop out gray-green innards. Use back of heavy knife to crack open both claws. Repeat with remaining lobsters. (A fishmonger can do this if lobster meat is then cooked within an hour.)

Andrew Scrivani / The New York Times / Redux

Arrange lobsters in single layer in large roasting pan (or use 4 large gratin dishes). Coat body and claw meat generously with Cajun butter. Broil, basting once halfway through with pan juices, until lobster meat is cooked through and slightly charred, about 12 minutes. Remove lobsters from oven. Spoon pan juices over lobsters and serve. Serves 4.

Accept no substitutes: The best of the 2003 Brunellos

Brunello has survived "Brunellogate," said Bill Daley in the *Chicago Tribune*. Last spring a micro-scandal erupted in Italy after reports emerged that some winemakers of Brunello di Montalcino—required by law to be made with 100 percent Sangiovese grapes—were diluting it with 5 percent of Merlot or other varieties.

Although some winemakers still feel that adding a little Merlot to the Brunello formula will make the wine softer and fruitier, the Italian consortium of Brunello producers rejected a proposal to allow other grape varieties in their wine. They were right. This great wine—"one of the best red wines of Italy"—should not be tinkered with.

Brunellos that have been aged for five years—half of that time in wooden barrels—are officially designated *riservas*. The latest *riservas* have now been released, and are close to their peak and ready to be drunk. In a recent blind tasting by our panel, these emerged as the four best:

2003 Altesino (\$69) This wine's black cherry color practically glows in the glass. A "fruity, wood-scented nose touched with a whiff of the sea." Delicious when served with roasted pheasant or braised short ribs.



2003 La Gerla Vigna gli

Angeli (\$75) "The knockout aroma of spice and black pepper" is the first thing you notice about this young, somewhat rough, velvety purple wine. Serve with roast beef, risotto with porcini mushrooms, or crown pork roast.

Neri Tenuta Nuova (\$75) A lively, tannic wine, "with lip-smacking acidity." A perfect match with roasted soy-lacquered duck, braised rabbit, or prime rib.

2003 Canalicchio di Sopra (\$60) This astringent wine has notes of fruits and black pepper. Serve with roast turkey and trimmings or venison.