

San Diego MAGAZINE

In the Kitchen with Chef Kevin Templeton

The Barleymash executive chef shares his recipe for Stella mussels and clams

Photography by James Tran and Valerie Durham 23 hrs ago



Mussels and clams may seem intimidating, but chef Kevin Templeton, the *Chopped* champ who helms the kitchen at Barleymash, assures us that this showstopper seafood with a twist from the Gaslamp mainstay's pre-pandemic menu is much more manageable than it looks.

"It's actually a dish you can do at home. You can overcomplicate it, or keep things very, very simple," he says.

It all starts with quality shellfish. Freshness and sustainability are nonnegotiable to the veteran chef with more than 20 years' experience in local restaurants, so he sources his from a family-owned business in National City that works with local fishers and also sends out their scraps to make organic cat food.



Growing up on an East County ranch fostered both Templeton's creative drive and his farm-to-table mindset. As a teen he honed his skills in his parents' kitchen, often serving meals to his punk rock pals before heading out for the night. After culinary school, he worked the kitchen in some big-name restaurants, such as Top of the Cove and Azul, but he considers recipes like this—and his other innovative takes on comfort classics at Barleymash—to be the culmination of his career.

"This is my passion, my love in life," he says. "My favorite part about cooking is definitely the creativity."

Templeton has an unconventional side—he's a motorcycle enthusiast and death metal musician—so it's fitting that his dishes go a little off-script. Instead of a traditional white wine broth, the innovative chef gets creative with Stella Artois, a classic Belgian lager that combines the sweetness of malt with crisp hop bitterness and a soft, dry finish.

"I grew up professionally in fine dining French restaurants, and the classic wine and all that is fantastic," Templeton says. "But, since we're more of a bar, I wanted to use a beer instead, and you just get a really good full-body flavor. Stella is a great one because it's a Belgian beer and mussels are a huge staple dish of Belgium, so it just really fits."

He was kind enough to share with us the recipe for this mouthwatering mix of seafood, Stella, butter, garlic, and fresh herbs.

"I just love this dish. It's light, it's refreshing, it doesn't weigh you down, and you can eat it in all seasons. It's great for the summertime and great to warm your body during the wintertime. I'm really, really happy and proud of this dish."



Stella Mussels and Clams with Fries

Ingredients

3 tablespoons olive oil (or preferred oil)

3 tablespoons minced garlic

3 tablespoons minced shallots

2 pounds fresh mussels, cleaned

2 pounds fresh clams, cleaned

12 ounces Stella Artois Lager

16–20 ounces clam juice

4 ounces butter

8–12 ounces French fries (raw)

2 tablespoons fresh herbs, chopped (chives, parsley, tarragon, chervil)

Fresh lemon half

Salt and pepper to taste

Fresh bread (optional)

Equipment needed

4 quart stock pot with lid

large spoon

large serving bowl (optional)

Heat your pot to medium heat and add oil. Once the oil is heated to a watery consistency, add the garlic and shallots. Make sure to stir the garlic and shallots so they don't burn. Once the garlic and shallots have a nice and light golden-brown color, add the mussels and clams. Gently stir them until coated in garlic and shallots. Keep stirring for about 30 seconds (Be mindful to not break the shells of the mussels and clams). Pour in the Stella Artois Lager and stir, then pour in the clam juice. Cover the pot and turn the heat up just enough to get a nice simmer. Once the broth is simmering, give it another stir and add the butter. Cover for a minute (watch out for steam when taking the lid off) and then stir a little more. If all the mussels and clams have opened fully, they're ready. If not, cover again for a few more minutes. Once it's steaming, you're almost there. Remove from heat and set aside just after the mussels and clams open up.

If you have a fryer at home, you can cook the French fries at the same time as the mussels and clams or cook them just after. Always be careful when using a deep fryer. If you don't want to fry them, you can toss the fries in a little cooking oil and bake them in the oven at about 350 degrees until golden brown.

When ready to serve, pour the mussels and clams into a large serving bowl with the broth or just leave them in the pot and serve that way. Place a large handful of French fries on top. Sprinkle with the fresh chopped herbs and squeeze of lemon. The broth should be nice and salty, but if you want, sprinkle some nice sea salt and fresh cracked pepper on top. Toast some fresh bread to soak up the broth if desired.

Enjoy, and pop open a refreshing cold Stella Artois or citrusy Stella Artois Solstice Lager to enjoy with your incredible meal—and toast to your hard work. Cheers!

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