



# HEADING TO THE HERMÈS STORE

always feels a bit sacred to me—going to worship at the altar of the god of exquisite taste. But if you don't live near one, eBay is a great place to troll for all things Hermès. Be extremely careful of counterfeiters, however. Read up on the way you can tell a fake from the real thing. But again, I have nothing against wearing something that is not the real thing as long as you aren't *paying* for the real thing.

## HOW TO TIE AN HERMÈS SCARF



# ARTISANAL BLEND FONDUE

*serves 6*

Kosher salt	1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons
1 clove garlic, end cut off and discarded	cornstarch
3 cups shredded Comte, Emmenthaler, and Vacherin cheese (for 12 ounces total), at room temperature	1 cup dry white wine
	1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
	1 pinch nutmeg
	Black pepper in a mill

1. Put 1 teaspoon salt in a fondue pot or a heavy-bottomed, 2-quart stainless-steel saucepan. Vigorously rub the exposed end of the garlic over the surface of the pot, starting in the salt and coating the entire surface. Discard the garlic.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the grated cheese and cornstarch, mixing well to distribute the cornstarch evenly. Set aside.
3. Add the wine and lemon juice to the prepared fondue pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
4. Once the liquid has come to a boil, slowly add the cheese and cornstarch mixture, whisking continuously. Make sure each addition is completely melted and incorporated before the next addition.
5. Once all of the cheese has been added, cook it over medium heat for one minute. Season with nutmeg, salt, and 4 grinds of pepper, or to taste. Remove the pot from the heat and serve.

**EMBELLISHMENTS:** *Serve the Artisanal Blend Fondue with cubed bread. Day-old bread is best, but any crusty bread will work well. The Artisanal Blend Fondue may also be served with boiled fingerling potatoes, sautéed beef tips, pickled vegetables, or air-dried beef, kielbasa, and/or sausage.*

## BOUILLABAISSÉ RECIPE

I thought that nothing could compare to the bouillabaisse recipe that I learned while at Ritz Escoffier in Paris. Then I moved to New York and befriended a beautiful ex–opera singer/garden designer and mad chef Marie Viljoen. It could be her company, or her tiny charming Brooklyn apartment (that she blogs extensively about in “66 Square Feet”—which are exactly the dimensions of her terrace garden). Mostly I think it’s her dedication to getting it right and not caring about how long it takes. This is definitely a dish that is all about the preparation! Here is Marie’s master recipe in her own words:

This is not an authentic bouillabaisse. There may not be one authentic bouillabaisse, but this is authentically mine. If you have a free day you can make this in one day, or half, since you must buy the fish the same day. If not, make the stock ahead and freeze or start again the next day.

*serves 6*

• One each of three different kinds of fish, with heads, bones, etc.,  
• cleaned, scaled, and roughly chopped (for example, snapper, John  
• Dory, rouget, branzino). You can fillet these fish and save the fillets  
• for adding to the soup later, but then you must make the whole  
• thing the same day.

• 1½ lbs of shrimp, with shells and, preferably, heads. Shell and clean  
• the shrimp, keep tails for soup, and reserve shells for stock.

• A lobster if you are rich, two if you know a diver. Reserve tail meat  
• and keep the chopped body and head. No, the green stuff isn’t icky,  
• it’s good. It’s the tomalley. Liver, OK? Keep it. Throw away the gritty  
• sac though (you can’t be squeamish). Also the dead man’s fingers  
• (lungs, blegh . . . OK, a little squeamish).

• 3 large onions, chopped finely

- 1 head (not clove, head) of garlic, chopped finely
- 2 bulbs fennel, chopped finely
- 6 tomatoes, skinned, chopped, not finely
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 bottles of good white wine, not wooded, slightly fruity, but dry. It has got to be wine you would drink (and would be very nice if it is the wine you will drink . . .)
- 3 bay leaves
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 1 bunch parsley
- 10 peppercorns
- 1 tbsp sugar
- salt

## HOW TO MAKE THE STOCK (OR “SOUL” OF THE SOUP)

Pour a healthy splash of olive oil into a large pot. Add onions, then garlic, sauté for about five minutes on medium to low heat, till translucent. Increase heat to at least medium and add fennel and cook another five minutes. Stir not to burn. Add chopped fish heads and bones, and prawn and lobster shells. Stir everything nicely so they're all in contact with the heat. Add tomatoes and tomato paste, stir again. Add herbs and peppercorns and sugar. Toss in two bottles of wine or until everything is covered. Add water if necessary. It will probably be necessary. Bring to a boil and reduce so that it's simmering (lots of steam, surface barely shaking), and skim off any scum that rises. Clean the kitchen.

The stock should cook for about an hour. Taste it at this time and add salt. Through a sieve, pour all the stock into a big bowl. You'll have to do this in batches, as the sieve fills up with bits. Push all these bits very hard against the mesh to get every little drop out. In my extreme moments I have put bits into a blender. I also broke the blender—but the idea is to get every ounce of goodness out of the bits.

OK—now you have a bowlful of stock. At this point I commit *another* heresy. I reduce it. Just by about a fifth. Which means you put it back into the big, now-clean pot, back on high heat and bring it to a boil, then reduce to a serious simmer, and let it do that for about thirty-five minutes.

There is an *alternative*, and since I'm going to hell already, I can tell you. It's . . . *chicken stock*. Real is best . . . but a *c-c-c-cube* does wonders. Phew, I feel unburdened. I would say I have done it 33.3 percent of the time when for some reason the stock just doesn't taste right.

## FOR THE FINISHED BOUILLABAISSÉ

Add a large pinch saffron. Add fillets from two or preferably three kinds of white fish, like the fish mentioned on page 156. They must be sliced into nice but not uniform bits. Bear in mind that the biggest pieces will take longest to cook and will be added a little earlier than the small pieces. Personally, I like the skin off. Boiled fish skin. Brrrr.

Add prawns or shrimp, either in the shell, cleaned; or the naked bodies; or entire, with head (this last will add an additional deliciousness to the soup, if you go for it). The quantity is worked out by estimating how many prawns or shrimp each person may like to eat. If you splurge and buy langoustes, get one each, tiger prawns, one or two each, etc.

If you are having lobster, add the tail meat and claw meat if you live where lobsters have claws. For the superdeluxe version, add Dungeness

crab claws and VERY fresh lump crabmeat. Add cockles or very little clams, about 1½ pounds, de-sanded by soaking in fresh water for ten minutes.

Add mussels, same and de-bearded, and only if you have a super-reliable fish person or local tidal rock. Mussels have made me very sick more than once (but never from my own bouillabaisse!).

Now before you start the final stage, some helpful hints:

Make sure you have invited people *you really like* to dinner. If you have things with shells that need to be cracked, buy claw crackers. If you don't have claw crackers, don't have things with shells. Have very big napkins, preferably of the pretty dishcloth variety. They will get stained. Have very good bread. Make it into toasts. Have aioli, or better, rouille.

So you have stock. You have beautiful fish. Everything else is ready. Your wine is chilling, there's a green salad for later, or before if you must, and poached pears or roasted peaches, depending on your season, for dessert.

Bring your stock to a simmer. Add your large pinch of saffron. First add the pieces of fish that look the biggest. Then the small guys. Add the cockles and mussels last\* (as you're doing this, increase the heat, because the cold fish will take heat out of the pot and slow everything down). When these shellfish have opened, it's ready. Throw out any you see that stay closed.

Serve in wide bowls, giving everyone a bit of everything. Dunk bread. Slather rouille or aioli (sometimes I stir some in—yet more heresy, before serving) on the bread. Drink icy white wine. Be very happy to be eating this with people you like.

\* If you have small prawns or lobster tail, cut into pieces and add these last—it is sinful to overcook them.