Soups / France

Lobster Shell Stock

Roasted lobster shells and heads reduced with aromatic vegetables, cognac, tarragon, and tomato into a deep orange, intensely seafood-rich base — the foundation for bisque, sauce Américaine, and any dish that demands the concentrated soul of a crustacean in a spoonful.

Time 120 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 700 g Lobster shells and heads (from 2 lobsters, roughly cracked)
- ☐ 40 g Unsalted butter
- ☐ 30 g Extra-virgin olive oil
- ☐ 100 g Shallots, thinly sliced
- ☐ 100 g Carrot, finely diced
- ☐ 60 g Celery stalk, finely diced
- ☐ 20 g Garlic cloves, smashed
- ☐ 40 g Tomato paste
- ☐ 150 g Crushed canned tomatoes
- ☐ 80 g Cognac or Armagnac
- ☐ 200 g Dry white wine
- ☐ 1500 g Cold water or fish stock
- ☐ 15 g Fresh tarragon sprigs
- ☐ 4 g Bay leaves
- ☐ 6 g Black peppercorns
- ☐ 2 g Dried chili flakes or cayenne
- ☐ 6 g Fine sea salt

Let's make it.

01 Spread cracked lobster shells and heads on a large, rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat. Roast at 220 C (425 F) for 15–20 minutes, turning once, until the shells are deeply caramelized — red-orange turning to mahogany — and the oven smells of roasted seafood. This Maillard reaction on the shells is the source of the stock's depth.

02 Transfer roasted shells to a large stockpot. Add butter and sauté the shallots, carrot, celery, and garlic directly in the pot with the shells over medium-high heat for 5–7 minutes until the vegetables are softened and golden. Deglaze the roasting tray with a splash of wine and scrape all the caramelized bits into the pot.

03 Add tomato paste to the pot and stir over medium-high heat for 2–3 minutes until the paste darkens and caramelizes. Remove the pot from the heat briefly and pour in the cognac — step back, the alcohol will ignite if using a gas flame. Let the flame die down or alcohol cook off for 30 seconds. Return to heat, add white wine, and bring to a boil. Reduce the wine by half.

04 Add crushed tomatoes, cold water or fish stock, tarragon, bay leaves, peppercorns, chili, and salt. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce to a slow simmer. Skim any foam from the surface in the first 15 minutes. Simmer uncovered for 45–60 minutes, until the stock has reduced by approximately one-third and is deeply flavored and a rich orange-red color.

05 Remove from heat. Pour the stock through a fine-mesh strainer placed over a large bowl. Press the shells firmly with the back of a ladle to extract every last drop of flavor. Strain a second time through a cheesecloth-lined strainer for maximum clarity if using for a refined bisque. Taste and adjust seasoning. Cool rapidly over an ice bath and refrigerate for up to 3 days, or freeze in small portions.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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