Main dishes / United States

Oysters Rockefeller

Plump raw oysters baked on their half-shell under a blanket of creamed spinach, Pernod, and golden breadcrumbs — the grand New Orleans appetizer of 1899, as rich as its namesake.

Time 40 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 12 oysters Fresh oysters on the half-shell, shucked (cup side up)
- ☐ 3 parts Baby spinach, washed and dried
- ☐ 0.5 parts Shallots and garlic, finely minced together
- ☐ 0.5 parts Unsalted butter
- ☐ 0.3 parts Pernod or Ricard anise liqueur
- ☐ 0.5 parts Heavy cream
- ☐ 0.1 parts Fresh tarragon, leaves only, finely chopped
- ☐ 0.5 parts Panko breadcrumbs and finely grated Parmesan, mixed 2:1

Let's make it.

01 Melt the butter in a wide sauté pan over medium heat. Add the minced shallot and garlic. Sweat gently for 4–5 minutes, stirring often, until completely translucent, soft, and sweet-smelling. The alliums must dissolve completely into the butter — any residual crunch will be unpleasant in the final topping spooned over delicate oyster flesh. Season lightly with salt.

02 Add the baby spinach to the pan in large batches, tossing with tongs to wilt each batch before adding the next — it will reduce to a quarter of its raw volume. Once all the spinach is wilted and any pooled water has evaporated, pour in the Pernod and let it sizzle and reduce for 30 seconds. Add the cream and increase heat to medium-high. Stir and reduce until the mixture is thick enough that a wooden spoon leaves a clear channel along the pan base. Remove from heat, stir in the tarragon, and season carefully with salt and cayenne.

03 Preheat the oven to 220°C (425°F), or preheat a grill/broiler to its highest setting. Arrange the oysters on their half-shells on a baking tray filled with rock salt or crumpled foil to keep them level — a tilted oyster loses all its precious liquor. Spoon a generous teaspoon of the Rockefeller topping over each oyster, leaving a thin rim of shell exposed. The topping should mound slightly above the shell edge. Combine the panko-Parmesan mixture and scatter evenly over each topped oyster.

04 Bake at 220°C (425°F) for 8–10 minutes, or broil for 3–4 minutes, until the breadcrumb topping is deeply golden-brown and the edges of the oyster flesh are just beginning to curl. The oyster itself should still be plump and juicy — it cooks almost entirely from the heat of the topping above it. If using a broiler, watch constantly: it goes from golden to burnt in under a minute.

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