Main dishes / United Kingdom

Seared Scallops with Pea Purée and Pancetta

Pan-seared king scallops with a velvety, sweet pea purée and crispy pancetta — a three-part restaurant classic with a brutally simple margin for error on the sear: golden on one side, translucent at the centre.

Time 30 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 12 whole King scallops, dry-packed, roe removed
- ☐ 100 g Pancetta, finely diced (or lardons)
- ☐ 1 clove Garlic, minced
- ☐ 60 ml Double cream (heavy cream)
- ☐ 10 ml Fresh lemon juice
- ☐ 5 g Fine sea salt
- ☐ 20 g Pea shoots or watercress
- ☐ 300 g Frozen garden peas
- ☐ 1 large Shallot, finely diced
- ☐ 60 g Unsalted butter
- ☐ 10 g Fresh mint leaves
- ☐ 15 ml Neutral oil (sunflower or grapeseed)
- ☐ 1 g White pepper

Let's make it.

01 Melt 20 g of the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the diced shallot and garlic with a pinch of salt and sweat gently for 3–4 minutes until completely soft and translucent — no color at all. Add the frozen peas and double cream, bring to a simmer, and cook for 3 minutes until the peas are just tender and brilliant green. Transfer everything to a blender, add the mint leaves, and blend on high until completely smooth. Pass through a fine sieve if you want restaurant-level silkiness. Season with salt, white pepper, and a small squeeze of lemon. Keep warm.

02 Place the diced pancetta in a cold dry frying pan and set over medium heat. As the fat renders slowly, the pancetta will crisp evenly without burning. Cook for 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the dice are deeply golden and crispy and the surrounding fat has fully rendered out. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Reserve the rendered fat in the pan — this will be used to sear the scallops.

03 Pat the scallops completely dry with paper towel — this is the single most important step. Any surface moisture will steam rather than sear. Season both flat faces with salt and white pepper. Add the neutral oil to the pancetta-fat pan and heat over the highest possible heat until the oil just begins to smoke. Place scallops flat-side down in the pan, one by one, and do not touch them for exactly 90 seconds to 2 minutes. The sear must be uninterrupted. They are ready to flip when they release easily from the pan — not when the timer says so.

04 The moment the scallops are flipped, add the remaining cold butter to the pan in two pieces. It will melt and foam immediately in the residual heat. Tilt the pan and use a spoon to continuously baste the scallops with the foaming butter for 30–45 seconds. Add a tiny squeeze of lemon. Remove scallops the moment the second side shows a pale gold — the center should still feel yielding. Rest on a warm plate for 30 seconds while you arrange the components.

05 Working quickly, spoon a swoosh of warm pea purée across each plate using the back of a warm spoon. Arrange three scallops per plate on and around the purée, seared-side facing up to display the crust. Scatter the crispy pancetta dice over and around the scallops. Finish with a small cluster of pea shoots or watercress placed in the center, dressed with a tiny drizzle of olive oil. The three elements must arrive together: any one of them cold ruins the dish.

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