

Oysters Rockefeller “Deconstructed”

Serves 4

4 thin slices bacon
2 cups unsalted butter
12 ounces baby spinach
2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
2 shallots, finely diced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons water
1 lemon, thinly sliced
20 medium oysters, freshly shucked (see headnote)
1 stick licorice root

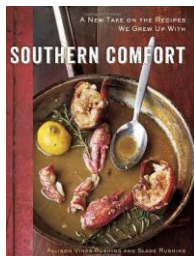
Line a plate with paper towels. In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the bacon until it is browned and crispy, about 5 minutes. Transfer the bacon to the prepared plate and let cool, then chop it finely and reserve.

To prepare the spinach mixture, heat $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the butter in a deep skillet over medium-high heat until it begins to brown. Add the spinach, garlic, and shallots, and season well with salt and pepper. Cook until the greens are just wilted, about 1 minute, being careful not to cook too long. Transfer the spinach to a colander to drain. Remove and discard the crushed garlic and finely chop the spinach. Set aside.

To make the butter sauce, cut the remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups butter into 1-inch cubes. Heat the water in a small saucepan until simmering. Decrease the heat and whisk in the butter pieces, one by one, whisking constantly and emulsifying the butter into the water. Once the butter is incorporated, the result is a smooth, velvety sauce. Turn off the heat, add the lemon slices, and steep for about 15 minutes. Season with salt to taste. This should be kept warm on top of the stove (not on direct heat) until ready to use.

To assemble the dish, bring the butter sauce to a simmer. Rewarm the spinach mixture over low heat in a small saucepan and place it in neat piles in small serving spoons. Drop the oysters in the simmering butter and poach them until they are warm and the edges begin to curl slightly, about 30 seconds. Transfer the oysters with a slotted spoon to a small bowl. Place an oyster on each pile of spinach. Spoon a small amount of butter sauce onto each oyster. Top each with chopped bacon. Finely grate licorice root on top and serve.

Note: Instead of licorice root, you can add 1 teaspoon of licorice-flavored liqueur, such as Pernod or Herbsaint, to your butter sauce for a similar flavor.



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