Gambas al Ajillo (Spanish Garlic Shrimp)

Quick · Serves 4 as an appetizer

Ken's note: TBD

Shrimp sizzling in garlicky olive oil, with a little heat and a splash of sherry vinegar. The oil is infused first with the shrimp shells, which is where the deep flavor comes from. Serve with a lot of crusty bread to catch the oil.

Ingredients

- 12 garlic cloves
- 1 lb large shrimp, peeled, shells reserved
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp kosher salt, plus more to taste
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (or a 1-inch piece of dried guajillo chile)
- 1½ tsp sherry vinegar
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- Crusty bread, to serve

Method

1. Mince 4 garlic cloves into a large bowl. Smash 4 more under a knife and put them in a large skillet. Thinly slice the last 4 and set aside.
2. Add the shrimp to the minced garlic with 3 Tbsp of the oil, the ½ tsp salt, and the baking soda. Toss and leave at room temperature.
3. Add the shells, remaining oil, and pepper flakes to the skillet with the smashed garlic. Cook over low to medium-low heat, stirring now and then, until the shells are deep red, the garlic is pale gold, and the oil smells wonderful, about 10 minutes. The oil should bubble gently the whole time. Strain through a fine sieve, pressing on the shells, and discard the shells and garlic.
4. Return the oil to the skillet and heat over medium-high until shimmering. Add the sliced garlic and cook, stirring, until pale gold, about 1 minute. Add the shrimp and cook, tossing, until barely cooked through, about 2 minutes. Add the vinegar and parsley, toss, and salt to taste. Serve right away.
5. A simpler version: toss 1 lb shrimp with salt and let stand 15 minutes, then cook in ¼ cup olive oil with 6 minced garlic cloves, 2 bay leaves, and 1 tsp red pepper flakes.