New England Clam Chowder

Make-ahead · Serves 6–8

Ken's note: TBD

Ingredients

- 6 slices thick-cut bacon, diced
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 lb red potatoes, ½-inch dice
- 4 (6.5-oz) cans chopped clams, juice reserved
- 2 (8-oz) bottles clam juice
- 1 bay leaf
- A few sprigs of thyme, or ½ tsp dried
- 2 cups half-and-half
- Black pepper
- Salt
- Chopped chives, for serving
- Optional: 2 lb littleneck clams

Method

1. Cook the bacon in a heavy pot until crisp; take it out, leaving the fat. Add the butter and soften the onion and celery in the fat, then add the garlic. Add the potatoes, the reserved canned-clam juice, the bottled clam juice, bay, and thyme. Simmer about 15 minutes, until the potatoes are very tender.
2. Mash about a third of the potatoes in the pot to thicken the chowder — no flour. Stir in the chopped clams and the half-and-half and heat gently; don’t let it boil. If you’re using littlenecks, add them now and cook just until they open. Taste before salting — the clams and the bottled juice are already salty. Top with the bacon and chives.