



Seared Scallops with Vanilla Champagne Crème and Haricots Verts

This sauce is a lovely way to use champagne in a savory dish. The champagne and vanilla work in concert to enrich the crème with a touch of sweetness. It works well as an accompaniment to any fish or shellfish. Here we pair the sauce with seared scallops, which have a crispy brown crust, and add a verdant mound of tender haricots verts to make a complete entrée.

4 servings

Ingredients

For the haricots verts:

1 pound of tender haricot verts, cleaned with strings removed
Juice of 1 lemon
¼ cup finest extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

For the scallops:

2 pounds large sea scallops
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil

For the vanilla champagne crème sauce:

½ cup chopped shallots
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 cup champagne
1 vanilla bean
1 ½ cups heavy cream
4 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pats
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 teaspoon champagne vinegar

Preparation

Make the haricots verts:

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Prepare an ice bath in a separate bowl with ice cubes and very cold water. Blanch the haricots verts in the boiling water until crisp tender, about 3-4 minutes. Drain the beans and plunge into the ice bath to cool. When totally cooled, drain well.

Whisk the lemon juice with the extra virgin olive oil in a non-reactive bowl, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Hold both the beans and the vinaigrette for service.

Make the crème sauce:

Heat a saucepan over medium heat, and add one tablespoon of olive oil. Sauté the shallots for 2-3 minutes, until they start to sweat. Add the champagne and bring to a boil. Meanwhile, split the vanilla bean down the middle and scrape the seeds into the pan, adding the pod as well. Cook at a low boil until almost all the liquid evaporates, being careful not to burn the mixture.

Add the heavy cream and return to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer gently until the crème thickens and coats the back of a spoon. You should have about ½ the original volume.

Mount the sauce by whisking in the butter little by little, until the crème reaches the desired consistency. Strain the sauce through a *chinois* or a fine mesh strainer, pressing on the solids with the back of a spoon

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to extract as much liquid as possible. Season to taste, with salt, pepper, and vinegar. Remove from the heat, but keep warm while searing the scallops.

Sear the scallops:

Heat a large stainless steel skillet over high heat. When the pan is very hot, add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and coat the pan evenly. The oil should shimmer. Season the scallops well with salt and pepper and add to the pan. Sauté the scallops for 2-3 minutes, or until browned nicely and a caramelized crust begins to form. Turn the scallops, and brown on the second side, and remove to a warm plate when barely cooked through. Keep warm.

[Chef's Note: Using high heat and watching the scallops carefully is essential to developing a beautifully caramelized crust without overcooking the scallops. The scallops will continue to cook when removed from the pan, so remove them when they are opaque, but not yet totally firm. If overcooked, they will become rubbery.]

Service

Toss the haricots verts with the lemon vinaigrette. Place a small mound of beans on the side of each plate, or lay the beans side by side in crossing stacks for a more elegant presentation.

Place an equal number of scallops on each plate in counterpoint to the haricots verts, and drizzle the champagne crème around the plate. Serve immediately.

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