

## **ZUPPA DI COZZE** - *Classic Southern Italian mussel soup*

1 kilo spanking fresh mussels  
500g tin Italian plum tomatoes  
1 or 2 cloves fresh garlic  
Dried or fresh chilli to your taste  
Large handful of fresh flat leaf parsley (leaves only)  
Splash of white wine  
Extra virgin olive oil  
Maldon or Isle of Skye salt

First start by cleaning the mussels. Leave them in the sink with ice cold cold water for about 5 minutes. Any shells that are open or float to the top of the water - BIN! The rest scrape off any barnacles and cut off any of the beard that are visible from the shell. Transfer the mussels to a bowl of cold water and leave in the fridge until you are ready to start cooking. I would never eat mussels that are more than a day old.

Next make the tomato base. Choose a large heavy bottomed casserole or stock pot. Take each plum tomato and roughly chop into 6 - 8 pieces. I like this texture as I feel it works with the mussels but you can use a passata if you prefer.

Add enough oil to lightly coat the bottom of the pot. Add one or two cloves of sliced garlic. Add enough chilli to you taste. Allow the garlic and chilli to sizzle but not brown. Add two or three glugs of wine and cook to burn off the alcohol.

Next add the tomatoes. Stir and simmer for about 20 - 30 minutes until the tomatoes look glossy and silky.

Strain the mussels and add them to the hot sauce. Cover with a lid and steam until all the mussel shells are open. This will take about 4 or 5 minutes only. Season with a little salt and the chopped parsley.

Enjoy with a chunk of bruschetta.