OYSTER STEW

INGREDIENTS

4 ounces smoky bacon, cut into 1-by-1/4-inch matchsticks
1 tablespoon chopped rosemary
4 small celery ribs, finely chopped
1 large onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic
1 fennel bulb, finely chopped
2 quarts storebought or homemade veggie broth, plus ½ cup white wine (a dry, minerally white)
1 stick unsalted butter
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 pound fingerling (white will work too) potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch rounds
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
Salt
Freshly ground pepper
1 pint freshly shucked oysters with their liquor
Hot Sauce, for serving

METHOD

In a large pot, cook the bacon over moderately high heat, stirring, until browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer the bacon to a paper towel–lined plate to drain. Pour out all but 2 tablespoons of the bacon fat in the pot. Add the rosemary to the pot and cook for 1 minute. Add the leek, onion, garlic and fennel and cook over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 10 minutes. Add the stock and wine and bring to a simmer.

Step 2
In a medium saucepan, melt the butter. Add the flour and cook over moderate heat, stirring, until the roux is the color of peanut butter, about 5 minutes. Scrape the roux into the soup and bring to a boil. Add the potatoes and simmer, covered, until tender and the soup has thickened, about 10 minutes. Stir in the cream, season with salt and pepper and return to a simmer.

Step 3
Add the oysters and bacon to the soup and simmer until the oysters are just cooked, curling up slightly, about 3 minutes. Spoon the chowder into deep bowls and serve with Tabasco.