

## Caracois (little snails)



### Ingredients

- ✓ 1 kg fresh caracoís (little snails)
- ✓ Lemon peel
- ✓ Garlic
- ✓ Oregano
- ✓ Thyme or rosemary
- ✓ Chili-pepper
- ✓ Stock cube

### Directions:

Buy or search for 1 kg of fresh caracóis (little snails). The ultimate thing is of course to get up early and walk the countryside yourself in search of the small snails.

First you have to get the slippery snails ready for the pot. Then the snails undergo a 'cleaning process', which means keeping them in burlap or net bags (or another suitable container from which they cannot escape) for approximately 14 days, adding some thyme and wheat flour or slices of potato to clean them from toxins and to fatten them a little. Only then are they ready to eat.

On the day they are being cooked, the caracóis first need to sit in water just covering them, for about 30 minutes to remove the crusty covering on the opening of the shell. Be careful: the snails get really active and you have to make sure they cannot escape.

Once all the snails have come out of their shell, wash them in cold water with a little vinegar, until the water drains clear, this should take about 3 good washings, and shells no longer feel slippery. Throw away any snails that stay in the shell.

Finally place them in a large pot with water just covering the snails and add a lemon peel, 1 stalk of dried oregano, 1 stalk of fresh rosemary or thyme, 1 hot chili-pepper, 5 cloves of garlic and a stock cube. \*Important: Do not add salt during the first 10 minutes, as snails will retreat back into their shells from the salt.

Let snails cook uncovered on medium heat, for about 20 minutes. A large bubble of foam will rise while cooking, this is normal and will subside when snails are finally cooked. You can use a larger pot to compensate for the bubbling over.

Traditionally caracóis are eaten on May 1<sup>st</sup>, in celebration of Portuguese labor day. Serve them on large tray or in individual bowls with an accompanying empty bowl for the shells. To get the snails out of their shells you can use a large headed pin or tooth pick. Some people use the sharp dried end of a agave leaf as a tool.

This is finger food, so be sure to also include lots of napkins! Serve with a cold beer and buttered bread.

Enjoy!

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