
PAN-SEARED NANTUCKET BAY SCALLOPS WITH A HARD CIDER BUTTER SAUCE AND SAUTEED BITTER GREENS

by Joan MacIsaac

(Serves 4 as an appetizer)

½ pound Nantucket Bay scallops
2 Tbsp. olive oil
½ tsp. salt
cracked black pepper

1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
2 Tbsp. shallots, finely diced
1 tsp. chopped thyme
3 sage leaves
2 cups hard cider
4 peppercorns, freshly crushed with mortar and pestle
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, room temperature

2 Tbsp. olive oil
2 shallots, peeled, cut in half lengthwise and sliced thin
1 pound of mixed bitter greens such as kale, radicchio or
chicory, washed and torn into 2–3 inch pieces
2 Tbsp. water
¼ lemon wedge
salt and pepper to taste

Preheat your oven to 200 degrees.

Place the scallops in bowl. Sprinkle the scallops with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, salt and pepper to coat. Set aside while preparing the sauce.

Place a small saucepan on the stove on medium heat and add 1 tablespoon of butter. Once melted, add the shallots and stir to coat. Cook for 2 minutes or until they turn soft and wilted. Add the thyme, sage leaves and cracked peppercorns and continue cooking for 1 minute. Increase the heat to high and add 1½ cups hard cider. Let the cider reduce to a quarter of its original volume, about 3–4 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and add 1 tablespoon of the room-temperature butter. Use a whisk or wooden spoon to incorporate the butter into the sauce (emulsion sauce). Gradually add the remaining butter, 1 tablespoon at a time. Taste the sauce. If it is still acidic and tart, add a tiny bit more butter. Add salt to taste. Reserve the sauce on the stove on very low heat while preparing the scallops and greens.

Heat a large sauté pan or cast iron skillet on high, making sure it's hot and not smoking. To test the pan for heat, use a tong to place a scallop in the pan. It should sizzle. Quickly remove the scallop if you are not hearing the sizzle. Wait for the pan to get hot and test a scallop again. When the pan is ready add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and swirl to coat the pan. Add the scallops to the hot pan and make sure to leave space between each scallop. Sear the scallops 1½–2 minutes or until you see browning on the edges. Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the scallops to a heat-proof dish. Deglaze the pan with ½ cup of the hard cider, use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned particles and let the cider reduce to half of its volume. Pour the deglazing juices over the scallops and place them in the warming oven.

Heat the same sauté pan on high and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Once hot, add the shallots and sauté for 2 minutes or until they start to brown on the edges. Add a large mound of the greens to the pan. Use tongs to coat the greens in the oil and aromatics. The greens will begin to wilt with the high heat. Depending on the greens you may need to add 2 tablespoons of water to create steam. Rotate the greens with tongs until completely wilted. Remove the pan from the heat, squeeze the lemon on the greens and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Mound the greens on a platter and top them with the scallops. Pour the scallop juices into the hard cider sauce and stir to combine. Pour the sauce over the scallops and greens and serve.