Suddenly we wanted seafood. Lots of it every which way, and went straight for one of our favourite new cookbooks. Simply called *Seafood*, this shrimp-sized volume is a mouthwatering collection of recipes inspired by traditional cuisines from Southeast Asia to the Mediterranean.

Each recipe, from Snacks and Appetizers through Salads and Soups to Entrees, Pasta and Rice is accompanied by stunning colour photographs (we get a little bored with those white, out-of-focus ones...)! You'll have such fun just thumbing through *Seafood* and such a problem deciding just which recipes to try! Never mind, they're all wonderful and, best of all, easy to do once you've got that fresh seafood!

*On today's menu:*

- **Clam Chowder**
- **Char-Grilled Scallop Salad**
- **Seafood Spaghettini**

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**Clam Chowder**

You really have to make this dish from
scratch to banish memories of that tasteless cornstarch soup too often passed off as "chowder"...  

This one is the true New England version, made with clams and cream; variations include the Manhattan recipe made with clams and tomatoes, and the British kind with corn and smoked haddock instead of the clams. Warning: it will spoil you forever for true chowder!

Elsa Peterson-Schepelern developed this recipe; photograph by Peter Cassidy.

Serves 4

- 4 lbs fresh quahog clams, in the shell
- ¼ cup fish stock or clam juice, plus extra fish stock to make 1 quart
- 1 lb smoked pancetta or prosciutto, cut into cubes
- Safflower oil (optional)
- 3 onions, coarsely chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chipped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- A few sprigs of fresh thyme
- 8 oz. boiling potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes, 1½–1¾ cups
- 2 cups heavy cream
- Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper

For serving
- A large bunch of flat leaf parsley, coarsely chopped
- Oyster crackers

Put the clams in a large saucepan, then add ½ cup water and the fish stock or clam juice. Cover the pan, bring to a boil and boil hard for a few minutes until the clams open. Remove them as soon as they do and shuck them over a bowl. Don't overcook them or they will be tough. Discard the shells, reserve the clams and return the juice in to the bowl to the pan. (Discard any clams that have not opened.) Strain the cooking liquid through a strainer, then through cheesecloth, into a large glass measuring cup. Add enough fish stock to make up to 1 quart. Reserve.
Clean the pan, add the pancetta, and cook over low heat to render the fat (add a dash of safflower oil to encourage it if you like). Remove the crisp pancetta and set aside.

Add the onions, celery, carrot, bay leaves and thyme to the fat in the pan. Cook gently until the onions are softened and translucent. Add the cubes of potato and the reserved 1 quart stock, and simmer until the potatoes are done, about 10 minutes.

Chop half the clams, and cut the others in half through their thickness. Add the clams, pancetta and cream to the saucepan and heat through. Taste and add salt if necessary (remember the clam juices and pancetta are already salty). Remove and discard the bay leaves and thyme.

Ladle into warm soup bowls and serve sprinkled with lots of cracked pepper, crisp pancetta and handfuls of parsley, and with oyster crackers on the side.

**Tony's wine recommendation:**
A medium-bodied, dry white wine with a little oak ageing – white Burgundy, Ontario Chardonnay, New Zealand Chardonnay

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**Char-Grilled Scallop Salad**

It may be mid-winter in our half of the world, but a piquant, warm and juicy scallop atop fresh designer greens will chase the cold away fast. Elsa Peterson-Schepelern gave us this recipe and she reminds us not to overcook scallops; cook them only until they become opaque; the time depends on their size.

Another good hint: ask your fishmonger for dry scallops, as too often they've been soaked in a special solution which not only leaves a funny taste but also causes the scallops to go limp and flaccid upon cooking.

We love serving this dish with crisp sesame flatbreads and fresh butter.
Yum!

Photograph by Peter Cassidy.

Serves 4

- 8 oz. shelled green peas (fresh or frozen, or shelled fava beans, about 1½ cups)
- Salad greens
- 8 very thin slices of pancetta or bacon
- About 20 shelled scallops
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 4 tsp white rice vinegar
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Microwave the peas or fava beans on HIGH for 2 minutes. Cool under cold running water, then transfer to a bowl of ice cubes and water; if using fava beans, as soon as they are cooked enough to handle, pop them out of their gray skins. Discard the skins and reserve the beans. Alternatively, boil or steam the peas or beans until tender. If using frozen peas, follow the package instructions.

Arrange the salad greens on 4 plates.

Heat a stovetop grill pan or nonstick skillet, add the pancetta or bacon, and cook until crisp and brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels. Add the scallops to the pan and cook over high heat for 1 to 2 minutes on each side until browned on the outside and opaque all the way through. Do not overcook or the scallops will shrink and be tough.

Drain the peas or beans and divide them and the bacon between the plates. As soon as the scallops are cooked, add about 5 to each plate. Serve immediately, sprinkled with olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper.

**Tony's wine recommendation:**
Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire (Pouilly-Fumé, Sancerre). New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, Ontario Sauvignon Blanc or Soave
Seafood Spaghettini

Almost anything goes with this heavenly dish, but BBC TV cooking presenter Silvana Franco says whatever else fresh seafood you use, make sure to also include clams or mussels – for the flavour as well as their beautiful shells!

This recipe serves 4, but we're willing to bet that two will happily demolish this dish without a second thought... except "Oh, that was fabulous!"

Photograph by William Lingwood.

Serves 4

- 1 lb fresh mussels or clams in the shell
- 10 oz. dried pasta, such as spaghettini
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 10 oz mixed seafood, such as squid, cut into rings, shelled shrimp, and scallops cut in half crosswise
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Scrub and debeard the mussels, if using. Tap the mussels or clams against the counter and discard any that don’t close – they are dead – and any with damaged shells.

Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Add a good pinch of salt, then the pasta, and cook until al dente, or according to the timings on the package.

Meanwhile, heat half the oil in a large sauté pan or saucepan. Add the mixed seafood and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly until just cooked. Transfer to a large bowl and set aside.

Add the mussels for clams to the seafood pan, cover with a lid and cook for 5 minutes until all the shells have opened. Discard any that remain closed.

Drain the pasta well and return it to the warm pan. Add the mussels or clams, mixed seafood, parsley and the remaining olive oil. Add salt and
pepper to taste, toss gently to mix, then serve immediately.

**Tony's wine recommendation:**
A crisply dry white wine – Muscadet, Chablis, Grüner Veltliner, Aligoté, Gavi

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Happily enjoyed by Helen Hatton and Ron Morris.