



You will need: a large plate or baking dish, a knife, a large frying pan with a lid (or a baking sheet to cover it), a wooden spoon, two pounds of mussels, one onion, four garlic cloves, butter, salt and pepper, white wine, Pernod (optional), a baguette

Step
1



Refrigerate the mussels until you're ready to cook them by placing a damp paper towel in the bottom of a baking dish, then spreading the mussels on top in a single layer. This will help them stay alive.

Step
2



When you're ready to cook them, **inspect the mussels** and throw out any whose shells have cracked. Also toss those that have opened, if, after pressing the shells back together with your fingers, they open again. This means the mussel has died.

Step
3



Rinse the mussels under cold running water, then pull off and **discard the little strings** hanging from their sides, known as their "beards."

Step
4



Peel and finely chop the onion and garlic.

*From the store to the kitchen to the table: We outline the steps that get you from something raw to something cooked using simple ingredients, free of measurements and complicated techniques. A method that you can have in your back pocket and whip out whenever you like. We call it recipe-free cooking.



Heat the frying pan over medium heat. Add a pat of butter, letting it melt and become foamy. Add the onion and garlic, and cook until softened but not browned. Add salt and pepper.



Add the mussels to the pan, stir in enough wine to fill the bottom of the pan about 1/4 inch, turn the heat up to medium high, and cover the pan with a lid or baking sheet.



After cooking for a few minutes, check to see if the majority of the mussels have opened. If so, they're done. If not, cook a few minutes longer.



Once the mussels are done, add a few more pats of butter, and drizzle the Pernod over top, if using. Stir to melt the butter, transfer everything to a bowl, and serve with a baguette for mopping up the juices.

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Illustrations by Bill Russell. Find this online at www.chow.com/stories/11282.