

Moules à l'Anversoise (Belgium)

MUSSELS IN HERB SAUCE

Mussels—like clams or oysters—must be purchased with tightly closed shells. If the shells of an open mussel do not close when run quickly under cold water, the mussel must not be used. If the shells do not open when cooked, they must be discarded.

To serve 4

3 pounds mussels in their shells (about 2 dozen)	chopped fresh parsley
10 tablespoons unsalted butter	2 tablespoons fresh chervil or 1 tablespoon crumbled, dried chervil
½ cup finely chopped onions	2 cups dry white wine
½ cup finely chopped shallots	Freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons finely	

Scrub the mussels thoroughly under cold running water with a stiff brush or soapless steel-mesh scouring pad. With a small, sharp knife scrape or pull the black ropelike tufts from the shells and discard them.

In a heavy 8-quart casserole, melt the butter over moderate heat. When the foam begins to subside, add the onions, shallots, ¼ cup of the parsley and the chervil. Stirring frequently, cook for about 5 minutes, or until the onions and shallots are soft and translucent but not brown. Watch carefully for any sign of burning and regulate the heat accordingly.

Stir in the wine and a few grindings of pepper, then add the mussels, placing them hinge side down. Cover the casserole tightly and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 to 7 minutes, until the mussels open, discarding those that remain closed. With a slotted spoon, transfer the mussels to a heated tureen or to individual serving bowls. Strain the stock through a fine sieve lined with a double thickness of dampened cheesecloth directly over the mussels. Sprinkle them with the remaining 2 tablespoons of parsley and serve at once.