



Mussels with Harissa and Basil

PAIRS WONDERFULLY WITH A BOTTLE OF OUR VIOGNIER



Toasted walnuts are a surprise addition to the creamy, smoky red pepper puree that gets swirled into these harissa-spiked steamed mussels. Anisey Thai basil and salty-sour pickled onions complement the sweet, plump shellfish.

2 medium-size red bell peppers (about 3/4 lb.), halved
1 medium-size (7-oz.) white onion, unpeeled, quartered lengthwise
2½ Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. olive oil, divided
2 medium garlic cloves, unpeeled
¼ cup chopped toasted walnuts
1 small dried Thai chile, stem removed
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. kosher salt

2 ½ lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded
½ cup dry white wine
¾ cup harissa (such as Mina)
1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
½ cup roughly torn fresh Thai basil leaves
½ cup Pickled Red Onion Petals (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to broil with oven rack in middle of oven. Rub bell pepper halves and 2 onion quarters with 1 teaspoon olive oil. (Reserve remaining onion quarters for another use.) Arrange bell pepper halves and onion quarters, cut sides down, on a rimmed baking sheet. Broil in preheated oven until bell peppers are well charred, about 15 minutes, adding garlic to baking sheet halfway through broiling. Place bell peppers, onion, and garlic in a bowl, and cover with plastic wrap. Let stand at room temperature until vegetables are cool enough to handle and bell peppers are softened, about 10 minutes. Remove and discard garlic skins and charred skin from bell peppers and onion.
2. Transfer bell pepper mixture to a blender; add walnuts, Thai chile, lemon juice, salt, and remaining 2½ tablespoons oil. Begin processing on low speed, and gradually increase speed to high, processing until smooth, about 45 seconds total. Set bell pepper puree aside.
3. Heat a large heavy-bottomed saucepan or Dutch oven over medium-high until very hot, about 3 minutes. Add mussels, and shake pan to arrange mussels in an even layer. Pour wine into pan, and cover with lid. Cook, shaking pan occasionally, until mussels begin to open, about 5 minutes. Stir in



harissa and butter. Cover and cook, shaking pan occasionally, until mussels are completely open, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat, and discard any mussels that did not open. Stir in bell pepper puree. Using a slotted spoon, transfer mussels to deep bowls, and pour sauce from pan evenly over mussels. Sprinkle evenly with Thai basil leaves and pickled red onion petals.

4. **MAKE AHEAD:** Bell pepper puree can be prepared up to 3 days ahead and stored in an airtight container in refrigerator.

Pickled Red Onion Petals

ACTIVE 15 MIN; TOTAL 2 HR 15 MIN

MAKES ABOUT 1 ½ CUPS

These onion petals are slightly saltier than your average pickled onion, but the brine amps up the mussels, creating a perfect pair.

1 medium-size red onion, thinly sliced

½ cups water

1 cup granulated sugar

½ cup rice vinegar

3 Tbsp. kosher salt

Place onion slices in a medium-size heat-proof bowl. Bring 1 ½ cups water, sugar, vinegar, and salt to a boil in a saucepan over high, stirring occasionally to dissolve sugar. Pour vinegar mixture over onions, and place a small plate directly on onions to keep them submerged. Let onion mixture stand at room temperature 2 hours before serving. Drain pickled onions before using.

MAKE AHEAD Pickled red onion petals may be covered and stored in refrigerator up to 1 week.