

Geoduck Farci: Giant Sautéed Clam Stuffed in Its Own Skin — No, Really

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Every food you eat is located on a spectrum between the familiar and the unusual.

Favorite foods should always be the same, especially at breakfast. Every morning, it's gotta be Pop-Tarts, granola, or whatever. Maybe you wake up with huevos rancheros or a full English, and the coffee better be right. One of the miseries of travel is waking up to wrong breakfasts served with the wrong newspaper.

On the other hand, we have an appetite for novelty as well. Just not at breakfast.

In Petronius' 1st century "Satyricon," a Roman parvenu named Trimalchio, a conspicuously conspicuous consumer if there ever was one, awed his guests at a banquet when slaves lugged in an enormous hollow hen made of wood. Opening the contraption, peacock eggs were revealed in the nest, which weren't eggs at all, but tiny birds molded inside a sweet pastry crust to look like eggshells. Diners lustily reached for the rare treats, and the birds flew from their greedy fingers up into the room to a chorus of oohs and aahs.

We still eat food that looks like what it isn't. Take Animal Crackers, Red Vines, Peeps, chocolate Easter bunnies, bugs on a log, gummy bears, lemon drops. And what about the surimi crab in sushi, plant-based burger patties, and the gorgeous buttercream flowers on wedding cakes? All trompe l'oeil, as they taught us to say decades ago in Art 101.

Some food is just too different for me, though. Connoisseurs claim fugu sushi is a once-in-a-lifetime taste revelation, but if incorrectly prepared might make "once" the operative word. Escargot, OK, but please, no lizard or stuffed camel. I'll sample the bear stew at the McCleary Bear Festival in July, but not roasted scorpions on a skewer in a Chinese street.

As you read this, it's August and the tide chart is showing minus tides at the beginning and middle of the month.

You might be thinking, "Let's go dig geoducks!"

So, you have your Washington State Shellfish Permit, right? And a couple of shovels, and access to a beach whose owner doesn't mind. Take the family and visitors, all well sun-screened, out in the boat at low tide to dig up a couple of the, shall we say, "unusual" giant clams.

Wow! You manage to dig out two of them, and, all covered in mud, everyone is high-fiving like the Mariners had made it to the World Series.

I don't know anyone who doesn't have a



It's somewhere between sausage, clam, and something else entirely. *Dan Clouse*



go-to chowder recipe. Fine, but the bored family asks, "Chowder again?"

Perhaps you have a whimsy for something different with geoduck this summer. How 'bout something to impress your jaded summer guests who haven't had a surprise since the 2016 Election?

Et, voilà: here's a newfangled dish that I bet you've never seen before: Call it "Geoduck Farci."

Without the Julia Child-style French, it's really just a recipe for sautéed geoduck stuffed with a vegetable medley in the skin of the clam's neck. Or, in good KP vernacular, "geoduck sausage."

One medium-sized geoduck will feed two people. This recipe is for two geoducks to serve four.

Begin by cleaning the siphons or necks and cut each one free from its body.

Rinse the necks under your sink's hottest tap water for about a minute. The skin will peel off in one piece as easily as a dry tube sock. Save the necks for that chowder or

sashimi; they are not part of this summer folly.

Tie a granny knot in one end of each skin and put both in a bowl of water to keep from drying out.

Prepare the vegetable mirepoix. Chop an onion, two peeled carrots and two ribs of celery. Sauté the vegetables gently in two tablespoons of butter with some fresh oregano or thyme, until the onion is transparent, but not browned. (You may well prefer an Italian soffritto or Louisiana Holy Trinity instead of the French mirepoix. In the photo, you'll see a version with added red bell pepper for color.) Set aside.

Cut the small muscles that hold the bodies to the pathetically undersized shells. It's easy to separate and discard the other strange-looking organs.

Rinse each body, or what some call the foot, which is now just a fraction of the original 2- or 3-pound clam, and chop both into half-inch chunks.

Sauté the geoduck pieces briefly in butter over medium heat. This part is very tender and needs little cooking. Be careful not to overcook.

Combine with the mirepoix or your preferred vegetable combination.

Spoon the geoduck and vegetables into the untied ends of the skins you peeled from the necks earlier. Push the shellfish and vegetables down into the casing as if it were a sausage until you have the tubes filled. The hardest part is holding the end open wide enough with one hand while spooning in the filling with the other. Good luck: This part has been known to require a steady glass of wine for the chef.

Tie the open ends. If you have more stuffing, set it aside for extra servings.

Paint the casings with butter and carefully arrange the two Geoduck Farci with any leftover stuffing in an overproof pan, and warm in the oven at 300 degrees for 20 minutes, being careful not to burn the casing, which gets brittle quickly as it dries out.

Serve with a summer salad of aragula dressed with vinaigrette, a rustic baguette and a dry white wine.

The stuffing will spill as you cut the casing, so you'll need a fair-sized pair of serving spoons to get your unusual seafood creation onto plates.

Trimalchio's sybarites might not be impressed, but you have to admit, it's darn unusual. ■

We'd love to feature a dish from your KP kitchen that friends and family ask for. Email the details to editor@keypennews.org with your phone number; we'll be in touch.