

## *Italian-American Recipes -*

### *Shrimp Scampi Style*

It is amazing that a dish this simple can be so delicious. It is a real crowd pleaser - loved by adults and children alike and perfect as the only dish, or one of several fish dishes (sometimes as many as seven!) served on an Italian-American Christmas Eve feast. "Scampi style" in America just means that shrimp are cooked in a light sauce of garlic, butter and white wine to a delightful tenderness and flavor.

The Italian name "scampi" is the plural of "scampo," which means "safety, salvation, or escape," and the verb "scampare" means "to escape." Regarding this dish, the word "scampi" cleverly refers to the tail of a certain small lobster found in the North and Mediterranean Seas. The French name is "langoustine" and the Spanish name "cigala." This small lobster (to get technical, the true name is Nephrops Norvegicus) has meat in the tail section but not much in the claws. In the UK, "scampi" refers to the preparation of the whole tail of this lobster cooked in breadcrumbs, but tradition elsewhere renders "scampi" as a preparation of garlic, butter and white wine. Try this easy-to-make dish this Christmas Eve and see for yourself how wonderful shrimp can taste!



#### **Ingredients**

1 pound of linguine, cooked (serves 4-6)

2 Tablespoons olive oil

8 Tablespoons unsalted butter

1-2 shallots, finely chopped *or* 1/4 cup finely chopped onions

6 plump cloves of garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1/4 tsp salt and pinch white pepper to taste

1 cup Italian white wine (chill the rest of the bottle for dinner)

1 pound large shrimp (about 16-18), cleaned, shell peeled off and de-veined\*

Few sprigs of chopped parsley

## Procedure

First, start to cook the linguine, and let the pasta cook as the sauce is being made. If you are lucky it will all come together at about the same time!

General method for cooking pasta: set a large pot of well-salted water on the stove to boil, and at the rolling boil add the pasta; stir; cover the pot to bring back to a boil quickly; uncover, stir, and cook until pasta is "al dente" (slightly firm). Drain and keep warm if pasta is ready before sauce is finished.

Set a large skillet with high sides or your largest frying pan on a burner over low heat. Watch the pan very closely from start to finish so that the shallots, garlic, and butter do not turn brown. The "sauce" will come together very quickly.

Put the olive oil and shallots or onions and garlic into the skillet with the salt over medium heat and cook, stirring as needed, until they soften (do not let them brown).

Add the butter and cook over low heat, letting it melt slowly. Cook until the onions and garlic are translucent (cooked through).

Add the white wine and raise heat to boil down the alcohol in the wine and thicken the "sauce." Boil down until about 3/4 cup of wine is left.

Add the shrimp and cook briefly over medium heat on each side (about 3-4 minutes) until they turn pink, turning and moving the shrimp in butter as needed. Do not overcook, or the shrimp will dry out and become rubbery.

Taste and adjust salt and add a pinch of white pepper as needed. If too much wine has boiled off by the time the shrimp have cooked, add some pasta water. If the sauce seems a bit watery, take the shrimp out and boil down a bit more.

Take pan off heat and add the chopped parsley.

Enjoy over freshly cooked linguine. As this is a delicate fish dish, no grated cheese topping is needed!

\* To get the best flavor from the shrimp in this dish, it is best to buy the shrimp raw and clean them, although shrimp can be bought already cooked and just warmed through in a pinch. When cleaning the shrimp, the veins along the outer curve and inner curve of the shrimp should be removed by making a slight cut and pulling each vein out. I have a shrimp knife that I found in a specialty food catalog long ago that makes the work quick and easy.

-Adapted from *Cooking Classes of the Italian American Society of Peoria*  
-Kathryn Occhipinti

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