

## Scallops with confit garlic and baked tomato

You really have to track down 'dry' diver scallops to appreciate how sublime a scallop should be.

Frozen scallops simply don't work, no matter how diligent you are about dabbing away retained water – they still boil in their own liquid of searing beautifully.

As a very second rate compromise, buy the fresh "dry scallop meat" from a decent monger and dab them very dry on kitchen paper.

If the fishmonger is offering them in the shell, here's how to open them: Hold the scallop firmly wrapped in a thick tea towel to prevent slipping. Use a short knife with a good thick blade which you insert between the 2 shells. Leaver them apart, chuck the top shell. Remove the scallop from the bottom shell. Separate the white scallop and orange coral from the yuck. Most chefs chuck the coral – or bake it into fish powder. Personally I like the corals, so we leave them intact. If cooking the corals, slit them in half with a small sharp knife and remove any dirt.

### \*Coral powder

Slice each coral in half and remove dirt. Preheat oven to 100°C. Corals onto a non-stick baking parchment on a baking tray and leave for 12 hours, overnight in the oven. Remove when they've gone brittle. Grind them in a processor to a fine powder. Great for flavouring and garnishing.

### For the tomato

Cut half a dozen tomatoes in half and arrange in a large baking dish. Cut half a dozen peeled garlic cloves into thin slices and arrange over the tomatoes. Mix 100g fresh white breadcrumbs with a good handful of finely chopped flat leaf parsley. Combine crumbs and parsley and scatter over the tomatoes, drizzle with 2 tbsps of olive oil and bake in a preheated 180°C oven for 45 minutes until the tomatoes are soft, brown and sizzling.

### For the garlic confit – 4 portions

Peel a dozen large garlic cloves, place in a small saucepan with 250ml extra virgin olive oil, bring to simmer, then reduce the heat until you get the occasional blip and bubble. Cook the garlic over this very low heat for about 30 minutes.

The garlic can be served immediately or be preserved for ages. The oil can be used to prepare garlicky dressings.

### Cooking the scallops – 4 portions

12 plump scallops

Malden salt, black pepper

Olive oil for cooking

12 basil leaves, shredded

Tsp thyme leaves

Warm confit garlic cloves, drained from their cooking oil

Hot baked tomatoes

Place a heavy frying pan over a hot hob. Pour a very thin film of olive oil in and when almost smoking, add the scallops.

Think of a clock face; place each of the 12 scallops around the pan. Cook for 1½ minutes each side. By having them in a 1 to 12 order you will know which scallop you've turned. To serve, season, sprinkle a few thyme leaves, present with the tomato, garlic and shredded basil