



Creamy Salt Cod Christmas Spread

A Fishy Story from Long Ago

Let me tell you about salt cod. Long ago, people needed fish to last all winter. They found that packing fish in salt kept it safe to eat. It was a clever trick from the old days.

My own Nonna used it for special meals. She said it reminded her of home across the sea. I still smile thinking of her soaking it in a big bowl. This recipe keeps those warm memories alive. That is why this matters. It connects us to family and history.

Getting the Fish Ready

First, we must be kind to our salt cod. It is very salty from its long sleep. Place it in a big bowl of cold water. Let it soak in your fridge for a whole day.

Change the water once halfway through. This gentle bath removes the extra salt. It wakes the fish up and makes it tender. Patience here makes all the difference later.

Cooking with Comfort

Now, we cook. Put the fish in a pot with milk, potato, garlic, and bay leaves. The milk makes everything soft and sweet. Doesn't that smell amazing? It fills the whole kitchen.

Simmer it until the potato is tender. The fish will start to fall apart. That is perfect. Save a little of that milky cooking liquid. You will need it soon. What is your favorite cozy cooking smell? Mine is garlic and bay leaves.

The Magic Whipping Part

Here is the fun part. Put everything in a food processor. Add a bit of lemon zest for a sunny sparkle. Now, turn it on. Slowly pour in a stream of golden olive oil.

Watch it turn creamy and pale. It is like magic. *Fun fact: This whipping method is called "mantecato." It means "buttered" in Italian!* The oil and the fish become one fluffy spread. This is why the method matters. It turns simple things into something special.

The Warm, Toasty Finish

Smooth the spread into a baking dish. Slide it under the broiler for just minutes. Watch it get spotty and golden brown. Let it cool for a tiny bit.

Now, the final touch. Sprinkle on fresh, green parsley. Drizzle with more lovely oil. I like to serve it with crusty bread or simple crackers. Do you prefer bread or crackers for dipping?

Make It Your Own

You can make this a day ahead. Just stop before broiling. Cover it and keep it cold. Warm it in the oven the next day, then broil. Easy for a party.

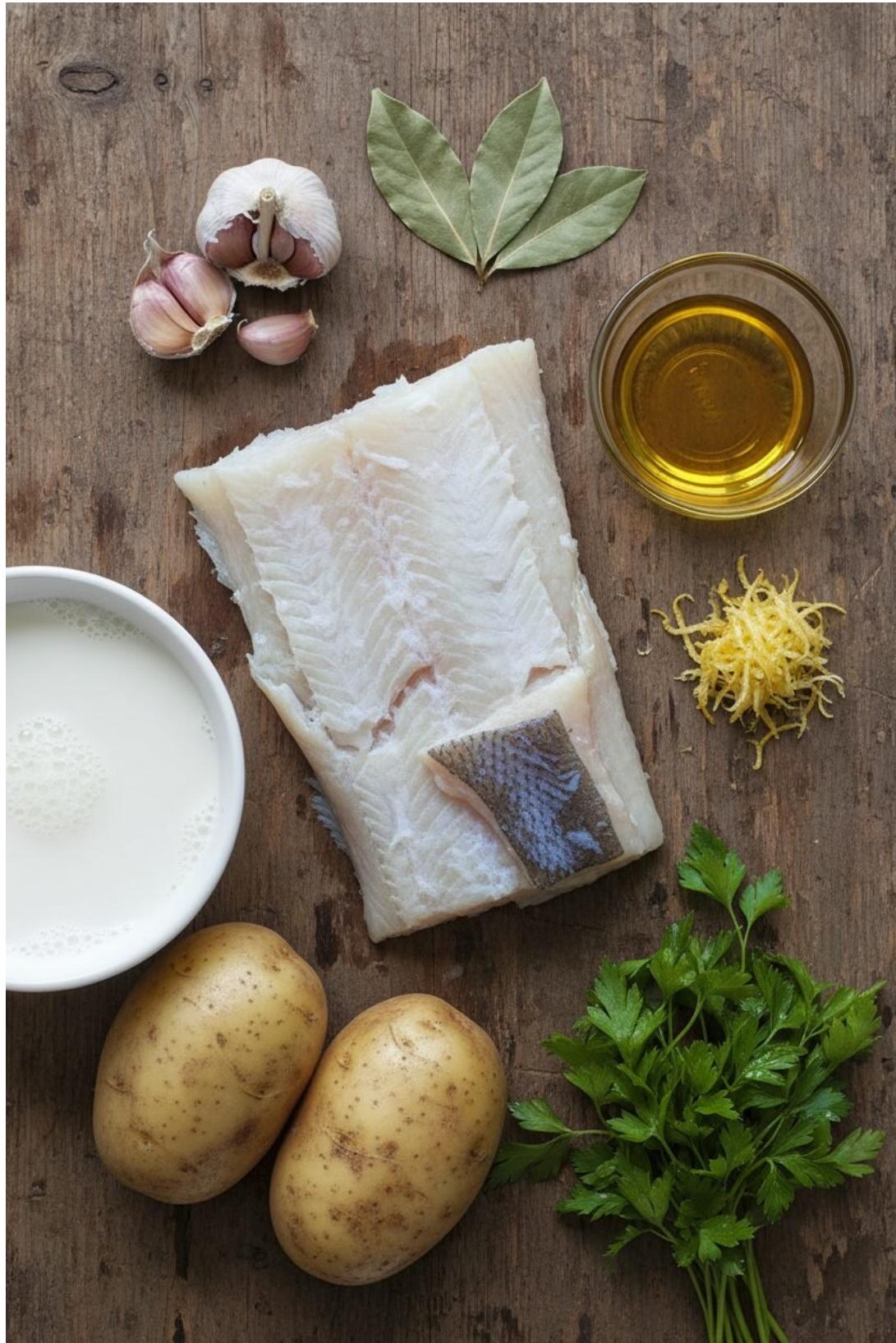
See also [Festive Fruit and Berry Preserves](#)

This spread is a taste of celebration. It feels fancy but is made with humble things. That is a good lesson for cooking and life. What is a special food your family makes for holidays? I would love to hear your stories.

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Salt cod	1 pound	Rinsed and soaked for 24 hours
Whole milk	4 cups	For poaching
Russet potato	1 (8 ounces)	Peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
Garlic cloves	6	Smashed and peeled
Bay leaves	2	
Lemon zest	1 teaspoon	Grated

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
Extra-virgin olive oil	1 cup, plus extra	Plus extra for serving
Fresh parsley	2 tablespoons	Chopped



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Instructions

Step 1: First, be kind to your fish. Rinse the salt cod well. Cover it with water in a big bowl. Let it soak in the fridge for a whole day. Change the water once halfway. This makes it nice and mild. (A long soak is the secret to flavor!)

Step 2: Now, let's cook it gently. Drain the fish. Put it in a pot with the milk, potato, garlic, and bay leaves. Bring it to a simmer. Cook until the potato is soft. The fish will start to flake apart. Save a little of that milky cooking liquid before you drain everything.

Step 3: Time to make it creamy. Put the fish mixture in a food processor. Add the lemon zest. Pulse it a few times. Then, let the machine run. Slowly pour in the olive oil. It will turn light and fluffy. Add your saved cooking liquid last. **What makes this spread turn fluffy and light? Share below!**

Step 4: Almost done! Spread it into a baking dish. Pop it under the broiler. Watch it closely until the top gets golden spots. Let it cool for just five minutes. I still laugh at how I burned the first batch! Finish with parsley and a pretty drizzle of oil.

Creative Twists

This recipe is wonderful as-is. But play with it! That's how kitchen memories are made. For a sunny touch, add a spoonful of chopped sun-dried tomato. A pinch of smoked paprika gives a cozy, warm whisper. Or, mix in some chopped capers for a little salty surprise. They make your taste buds dance. Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving & Pairing Ideas

This spread is a celebration. Serve it warm with toasted baguette slices. Doesn't that smell amazing? Crisp celery sticks or radishes are a fresh, crunchy side. For drinks, a crisp white wine is lovely for the grown-ups. For everyone, a sparkling apple cider feels festive. Pour it into a fancy glass. Which would you choose tonight?

See also Merlot Glazed Holiday Roast



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Keeping Your Spread Cozy for Later

Let's talk about storing this lovely spread. It keeps well in the fridge for two days. Just cover it tightly with plastic wrap. You can also freeze it for one month. Thaw it overnight in the fridge before reheating.

To reheat, warm it in a 350-degree oven for an hour. Then broil it for that golden top. I once forgot the plastic and the top dried out. A little extra olive oil saved the day!

Batch cooking matters for busy days. Making it ahead means more time with family. It fills your home with wonderful smells twice. **Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!**

Smooth Sailing for Your Spread

Three little problems can pop up. Here are my easy fixes. First, a spread that's too thick. Simply add a spoonful of warm milk. This makes it creamy and easy to spread.

Second, a spread that's too salty. Soaking the cod well fixes this. Change the water halfway, like the recipe says. I remember when my grandson added extra salt. We mixed in more potato to balance it.

Third, the oil not mixing in smoothly. Make sure your food processor is running. Pour the oil in a slow, steady stream. This creates a lovely, smooth texture. Getting it right builds your cooking confidence. It also makes the flavor perfect and rich. **Which of these problems have you run into before?**

Your Quick Questions, Answered

Q: Is this recipe gluten-free? A: Yes, all the ingredients are naturally gluten-free.

Q: Can I make it ahead? A: Absolutely. Follow the “To Make Ahead” instructions in the recipe.

Q: What if I can't find salt cod? A: You can use a very firm white fish. Poach it gently in salted milk instead.

Q: Can I double the recipe? A: You can, but make it in two batches in your food processor.

Q: Any optional tips? A: A squeeze of fresh lemon juice at the end is nice. It adds a bright little sparkle. **Which tip will you try first?**

A Little Note From My Kitchen to Yours

I hope you enjoy making this special spread. It is a tradition in my home. The smell always reminds me of Christmas Eve. *Fun fact: This dish is a classic from Venice, Italy!*

I would love to hear about your cooking adventure. Tell me about your family's holiday favorites too. Sharing recipes keeps our stories alive. **Have you tried this recipe?** Let me know how it went in the comments.

See also Spritz Cookie Christmas Wreaths

Happy cooking! —Elowen Thorn.



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Creamy Salt Cod Christmas Spread

Author: Elowen Thorn

Cooking Method:[Stovetop Broiling](#)

Cuisine:[Italian](#)

Courses: [Appetizer Side](#)

Difficulty: **Beginner**

Prep time: **30 minutes**



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Cook time: **25 minutes**

Rest time: **24 minutes**

Total time: **24 minutes**

Servings: **8 servings**

Calories: **320 kcal**

Best Season:**Summer**

Description

Warm Whipped Salt Cod Spread (Baccalà Mantecato)

Ingredients

- ▢ 1 pound salt cod
- ▢ 4 cups whole milk
- ▢ 1 russet potato (8 ounces), peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- ▢ 6 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- ▢ 2 bay leaves
- ▢ 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- ▢ 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for serving
- ▢ 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Instructions

1. Rinse 1 pound salt cod of excess surface salt. Place cod in large bowl and cover with 2 quarts water. Transfer to refrigerator and let cod soak for 24 hours, changing water halfway through soaking.
2. Drain cod, then combine cod; 4 cups whole milk; 1 russet potato, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces; 6 smashed and peeled garlic cloves; and 2 bay leaves in large saucepan. Bring mixture to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and simmer, stirring occasionally, until potato is fully tender and cod is beginning to break apart, 15 to 20 minutes. Reserve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooking liquid. Drain cod mixture in fine-mesh strainer and transfer to food processor; discard remaining cooking liquid and bay leaves.
3. Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Pulse cod mixture and 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest in food processor until finely chopped, about 8 pulses. With processor running, slowly add 1 cup extra-virgin olive oil in steady stream until fully incorporated, about 30 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Slowly add reserved cooking liquid and process until mixture is mostly smooth, about 30 seconds. Transfer cod

- mixture to 1½-quart broiler-safe baking dish and smooth top.
4. Broil cod mixture until top is spotty brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons chopped parsley and drizzle with extra oil. Serve.

Notes

To Make Ahead: Salt cod spread, prepared through step 3 and covered tightly with plastic wrap, can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours. When ready to serve, remove plastic, cover dish with aluminum foil, then heat in a 350-degree oven until warmed through, about 1 hour. Remove foil, then proceed with broiling and serving instructions in step 4.

Keywords:Salt Cod, Baccalà, Christmas, Spread, Appetizer