

a certain quantity, it was usually made for a group of people eating together. This suited the particular culture of Marseille, where teams of fishermen, or family groups could fish from the rocks, and eat their meal together in situ, cooked in a big dish on a fire made amongst the rocks. It was not a dish which anyone could eat alone, but belonged to the culture of the group.

Andre Suares, usually so sardonic about his home-city of Marseille, describes in *Marsilo* the almost idyllic lifestyle of the true eaters of bouillabaisse, spending their spare time in the cabanons, the huts beside the sea:

*Several men go fishing amongst the rocks: they leave in the early morning, their rods held high against their shoulders, waistcoat open, flannel shirts gaping; all have the same joyful appearance, a happy troop going down to capture the fish. Even those who don't fish are no less avid than the others for the racasse, girolles, gobis, crabs, and all that goes in the bouillabaisse... Is it not admirable that such people have found a recipe for happiness, even if it is a little dull to find it in a garlic sauce and a fish soup.*

The bouillabaisse is a communal dish. Originally it was made mostly from fish which could not be sold, fish which were ugly or not valued at the market. Since bouillabaisse needs a considerable variety of fish, and therefore needs to be made in

large quantities, of egg yolks, garlic, mustard and mayonnaise, be an accompaniment of aoli (a sauce), similar to bread, spine and bones removed. There may also be a sauce of breadcrumbs, olive oil and chilis). The fish are served separately, whole but with the bread, rubbed with garlic or with rouille (a spicy bread, rubbed with garlic or with rouille (a spicy

The stew is served poured over thick slices of olive oil).

should be served immediately.

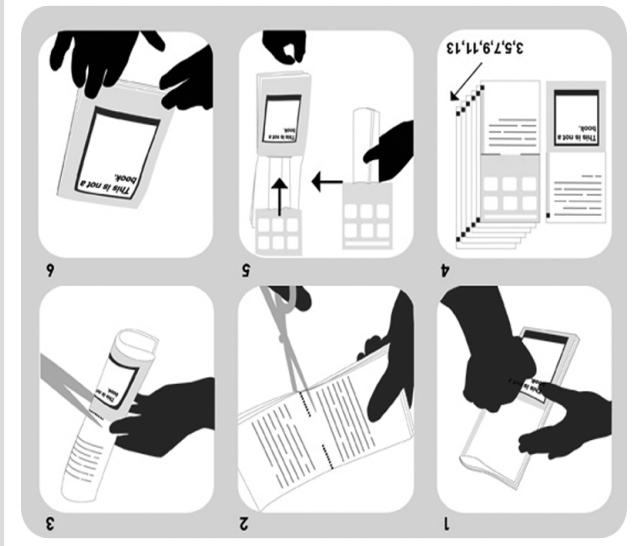
gutted and cleaned). The bouillabaisse is ready. It to what is available in the market, but have been add the scorpion fish and other fishes, according five minutes (the fish are whole, boil for four or with boiling water. After five minutes, no more, angler fish and the conger - compulsion. Cover soak in cold water. Ten minutes of fast boiling to tomatoes, four fine potatoes, cut in thick slices, than four kilos of prepared fish. Four fine kilos of whole fish (except for the angler fish,

## Marseille Mix: turn down the heat

William Firebrace

DIFFUSION GENERATOR





DIFFUSION EBooks are designed to be freely available to download, print out and share.  
[www.difffusion.org.uk](http://www.difffusion.org.uk)

created on: Fri Aug 29 22:54:28 2008  
**William Fibrebrace**  
**Marseille Mix: turn down the heat**

A mix does not imply that anything can be mixed to anything. A mix is not all inclusive. A mix is not a stew into which any ingredient may be thrown.

If Marseille is a mix, then it is also a particular kind of mix, with particular elements added in a particular way, in a particular sequence. Some of these elements have been planned, most have emerged due to force of circumstances. Having become mixed together, often in ways that are no longer visible, the elements are then accepted and become formalised. Certain aspects of the mix, their unacceptably rough origins suitably concealed, become transformed and taken in as part of the bourgeois world. The gastronomic version of this city mix is bouillabaisse.

Marseille and bouillabaisse go together. The dish is a cliche image of the city, an instant association for visitors - and also part of its deeper reality.

The dish has not one form but many, for there are innumerable receipts for bouillabaisse. Various restaurants in Marseille claim their recipe is the only authentic version, against the dubious degraded concoctions of their rivals. Lying somewhere amongst these kitchen squabbles is the usual Marseille search for a kind of origin, an origin which is long since lost and which probably

This is a fragment from *Marseille Mix*, a forth-urban, gastronomic and cinematic aspects.  
 coming book exploring the city's literary, criminal,

They lay, contented, in the darkness, listening to the fine sound of the traffic passing below.

Passion? More passion! Passion for the sea.  
 breathing for the sea makes it possible for us to pass ion for its currents and depths. Only this passion, if only, ... well, that would be real ...  
 cooking, if only, ... well, that would be real ...  
 breathing heavily. Fish and cockery and passion.  
 It's all an affair of fish, reprieved Sparrow, still  
 breathing heavily in this city.

The worst heresy for Marseille, bordering on number of other despised gastronomic heresies. Bouillabaisse is sometimes found with squid, with shrimps, with egg yolks, with spinach, with bouillabaisse made only with seabass. But so-called posseons, which is mere fish soup, or bouillade, gastronomy. It is clearly different from soupe de origin, and long become part of international dish has travelled outwards from its point of Catalonia and the calderada from Portugal, the like other fish stews, such as the zarzuela, from origins it can no longer be real bouillabaisse. But nowhere else. If it escapes these pure and simple coves, made with the rock-fish from here and fishermen of the calanques, of the limestone surroun dings, because it is a dish of the bouillabaisse can only be made in Marseille and its There also those who claim firmly that authentic gastronomy of the sea.

Phocaeans, so that the two unreliable myths of for bouillabaisse was brought from the east by the never existed. There are even claims that recipe phocaeans, of the city and of its dish, can be conveniently combined into one story, the worthy origin, of the the two unreliable myths of Phocaeans, so that the two unreliable myths of for bouillabaisse was brought from the east by the

some imaginary conversation taking place between humble fisherman and buyers. The waiters moved their arms with a sneering grace. Sparrow nodded in a knowing way. They waited a long while, engaged in an erratic group conversation. The wine was poured out, tasted, served. Nothing in particular seemed to be happening, but this seemed to be a part of the ceremony.

Everything to be slowed down, formalised, made almost absurd, as though something of vital importance was about to happen. The soup with the bread and the rouille was brought on and served out with care and precision. There was another long pause. Sparrow gazed again, sidewise at Sophia. Around them the restaurant seemed to be almost silent, in spite of the number of diners. Then came the fish, still whole, on their own plate, served by the waiters as a piece of distant theatre. The food was excellent but the environment so artificial that everything tasted faded, distant.

*If only, said Sophia as she lay with Sparrow later in the bed of his hotel room, if only the world of the original fishermen still existed, the rocks by the sea, the spray, the fire, the pan, the huts, the*

criminality, is naturally the Bouillabaisse Parisienne, a contradiction in terms, where butter is used instead of oil, and where even Pernod may be added.

The origin of the name has, appropriately enough for a dish of disputed origins, various explanations. It may come from the provenal *bouiaissa* or *bolhabaisa*, meaning that the temperature of the liquid should be lowered. Or from the provencal *bouipeis*, combining boiling and fish (peis). Or again from the provencal, implying that the pot is *bout en bas* placed low down on a fire lit amongst some stones, cooking the fish which are not suitable to be sold. At any rate there is agreement that the source is provencal.

Amongst the fish found acceptable for a true bouillabaisse, according to the Marseille poet Henri Deluy, are racasse (angler fish) fialas (conga eel), vive (weever fish), loup (seabass), saint-pierre (john dory), grondin (gurnard), baudroie (angler), galinette (?), rouget (mullet), sar (silver bream), murene (moray eel), anguille (eel), labre (wrasse), garri (?), bavarelle (?), sole (sole), cavillon (gurnard), chapon (?), pajot (?), rouquier (red mullet?), (goldsunny wrasse)

to be inspected for freshness. There seemed to be cloth. Smartly dressed waiters brought in the fish The table was dressed immaculately in white glanched at her, but she seemed to ignore him. relationship held some promise of development. Sparrow hated to eat in a group and had only sitting in a restaurant beside the Vieux Port. Robert and some others of uncertain names were acquaintances, Sophia, Michele, Dora, Marcel, It was evening time. Sparrow and some eat it alone.

You need a group to eat bouillabaisse, you cannot have changed. It has now vanished. Both fishing and families longer exists, because the culture which produced bouillabaisse. Its place as a popular dish has long been taken by the couscous, the pizza and other Marseille can certainly no longer afford authentic become more acceptable to diners. The poor of fish like angler fish, once frowned upon, have become rarer, and more expensive to catch. Ugly Many of these fish from the calanques have now

guests (minimum number of diners) and eight brown. Two or three pinches of saffron - for eight pepper. Warm them up, without letting them go bulk of fenNEL, zest of orange, some grains of leeks, five or six cloves of garlic, some parsley, to the oil a large chopped onion, two chopped several minutes of heat, take out the crabs. Add favour to a good quantity of hot olive oil. After A handful of favouilles (small crabs) give their to be concentrated, and the stock to cook rapidly. than the base, to allow the flavour of the fish should be cooked in a gratinadi, a pot wider at the Gourdes. He recommends that the bouillabaisse advice on the bouillabaisse made by his family in Deluy gives the following "lightly subjective" In a recent addition of *La Presse du Midi*, Henri particularly waters is thus changing also. Mediterranean, and the varieties of fish inhabiting is changing, along with the ecology of the south of Marseille, but the ecology of these coves fish. Some varieties may only exist in the coves different spellings and local terms for varieties of Marseille become inevitably lost in the many Some of these names from the fish terminology of (comber) sauré (mackerel) and various others. daurade (sea bream) scorpine (sea scorpion) saran