



TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2015

## Vince Schofield's Gooseneck Barnacles



I've eaten and written about all sorts of unusual seafood, from hagfish to sea urchin. So when chef Vince Schofield of the new Whisknadle Hospitality restaurant [Catania](#) in La Jolla started telling me about Gooseneck Barnacles I was intrigued. Schofield is a big fan of their briny flavor and clam-like texture. Popular in Spain and Portugal, where as a delicacy they can sell for as much as 60 to 100 euros a kilo, the barnacles can also be found in the waters off Morocco and Canada, and locally around Baja. And that's where Schofield gets his--from a diver in Ensenada and for far less: \$16 a pound.





Gooseneck barnacles, also known as percebes, are crustaceans that cling to rocks in heavy surf. They're very peculiar looking creatures. Long--usually two to three inches--and encased in a rough, wrinkled tube with a roundish shell attached to one end, they have a distinctive look. In fact, Schofield joked, the Spanish slang for them is "pitos de mono" or, um, monkey dicks.

In Mexico, the barnacles are served very simply--with lime juice, onion, and serrano chilis. But they can also be added to pizza as a topping after being cooked. They can go into cioppino or seafood soups or a creamy sauce. Add them to a salad or create a barnacle crudo with them.

But before you do any of that, you need to learn how to prepare them--and that's what Schofield brought me into his kitchen to teach me. And he gave me a very basic but oh so delicious recipe to share that can be enjoyed as is with a big hunk of toasted or grilled bread or added to pasta.



The first order of business is to blanch them. Yes, you could do this in plain boiling water (no salt needed; they're already infused with salt from being in the ocean), but Schofield makes an ersatz stock. He peels a carrot and tosses the peelings into the water, along with slices of fennel bulb, and herbs. The blanching lasts from 1 to 1 1/2 minutes. It could take a bit longer if you have a lot of barnacles or, as the ones we had were, they're larger than the usual 2 inches. Just don't overcook them or they'll be tough.



From there you shock them in ice water to stop the cooking process. Then, start pulling them out to remove the head-like shell and the gnarly outer skin. What you have is the tender meat, now cooked. Since they may still have some sea grit in them, put them in a bowl of water, which will loosen and remove the grit.



Add olive oil to a pan. When warm, add the garlic cloves. Tip the pan slightly so that the garlic is covered by the oil. Add the red pepper flakes and fennel seeds and briefly toast as the garlic continues to cook and soften.





From there you can perform all sorts of culinary magic with them.

### **Sautéed Gooseneck Barnacles**

From Vince Schofield, executive chef of Catania

([printable recipe](#))

Serves 3-4

#### **Ingredients**

1 carrot peeled completely

½ fennel bulb, sliced

Handful each of tarragon sprigs and basil sprigs

1 ½ pounds whole gooseneck barnacles (should yield 10 ounces meat)

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

3 cloves garlic, skin on (use more if you want to enjoy eating the garlic)

Pinch of red pepper flakes

Pinch of fennel seeds

½ tablespoon fresh oregano leaves

Pinch of kosher salt

½ lemon, grilled

#### **Directions**

Fill a large bowl with ice and water. Fill another bowl with just water. Fill a large pot with water. Add carrot peelings, fennel bulb slices, tarragon, and basil. Bring to a boil. Add barnacles and blanch for 1 to 1 ½ minutes. Remove the barnacles from the boiling water and shock them in the ice water. While they're still a little warm, remove the shell and the outer tube. Then drop into the bowl of water to remove any remaining grit.



Add the barnacles, fresh oregano leaves (save some for garnish), a pinch of salt, and the juice of the half lemon. Stir and cook briefly; you're really just rewarming the cooked barnacles. Remove from heat. Spoon all of the mixture into a bowl or cazuela. Garnish with remaining oregano leaves. Serve with toasted bread. Alternately, you can add to pasta.



Catania is located at 7863 Girard Ave. in La Jolla Village.