



Sautéed Scallops with Orange and Chipotle Sauce

SERVES 4

I once cooked an al fresco dinner in Santa Fe at the home of a local artist, a fundraiser supporting a community art school for children. For the appetizer I served each guest a spoon with a single scallop in a pool of a citrusy chipotle sauce. Everyone asked for a second serving, which I gladly provided, thankful I'd made plenty. I've since added this dish to many of my dinner menus, both as an appetizer and a main course. Sometimes I serve the scallops over pasta or polenta, but I think they're perfect on their own. The sauce, which has a splash of cognac, not only goes well with scallops, but also shrimp and most any fish.

INGREDIENTS

Scallops:

8 sea scallops (about 1 ounce each) or 16 smaller bay scallops

2 to 3 tablespoons vegetable oil

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground black pepper

Orange and Chipotle Sauce (recipe follows)

Orange and Chipotle Sauce (makes 1 cup):

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon minced shallot

1 teaspoon minced garlic

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 teaspoons cognac

1 tablespoon chopped chipotle chiles and sauce from a can of chipotle chiles in adobo sauce

$\frac{1}{2}$ (16-ounce) can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed

2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lime juice

1 tablespoon honey

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

2 teaspoons champagne vinegar

2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 cup baby spinach leaves

PROCESS:

Chipotles in adobo are dried and smoked jalapeños that are marinated in a spicy tomato and vinegar sauce. They can be quite hot, so adjust the amount you use according to your heat tolerance. You can always add more heat, but it's difficult to remove it.

Rinse the scallops in cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Heat the oil in a large, heavy skillet over



high heat. Sprinkle the scallops with the salt and pepper, then place in the hot oil, making sure they do not touch each other. Cook the scallops for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, or until they have a gold crust on each side but are still translucent in the center. Pour the chipotle sauce over the scallops and serve immediately.

The Sauce:

In a medium skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the shallot and garlic and cook for 45 seconds, until fragrant and just beginning to brown. Add the ¼ cup cognac and cook for 4 to 5 minutes, until reduced by half. Add the chipotles, orange juice concentrate, lime juice, honey, and mustard. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a simmer. Cook for 8 minutes, until reduced by about one-fourth.

Pour the sauce into a blender and add the vinegar, salt, and remaining 2 teaspoons cognac. Blend for 45 seconds, until very smooth. Pour back into the skillet, add the spinach, and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes, until the spinach is just wilted. Serve warm.