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One of the best ways to make a house into a home is to invite some friends over for a meal. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out for you. And if you have a favorite recipe of your own, send it my way.

Coquilles St. Jacques

These appetizers were very popular when I served them at a recent dinner party. The fancy French name makes it seem impressive, but the recipe is actually pretty simple. The scallops do require time in the broiler, so this dish goes best with an entrée you can prepare on the stovetop, like a pasta dish or pan-fried chicken or steak.

12 sea scallops, cut into 2-3 pieces each, or	Lemon wedges and bay leaves for garnish
36 bay scallops	3 Tbsp butter
2/3 cup water	3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
4 Tbsp medium-dry white wine	4 Tbsp light cream
1 bay leaf	1/2 cup (about 100 g) grated Gruyere cheese
Salt & black pepper	4 large scallop shells or medium-sized ramekins

1. In a small pan, combine the water, wine, and bay leaf, and season to taste with salt & pepper. Bring the mix to a boil, then lower the heat and add the scallops.
2. Poach the scallops for about 1 minute, or just until they are tender when tested with the tip of a knife. Lift the scallops out with a slotted spoon, place them in a small bowl, then strain and set aside the liquid.
3. Melt the butter in a separate pan, add the flour, and cook for about 1 minute, stirring constantly. Gradually stir in the reserved cooking liquid and bring to a boil. Stir constantly until the mix thickens. Reduce the heat and simmer gently for about 5 minutes, then reduce the heat again and stir in the cream and half of the cheese.
4. Stir the scallops into the sauce, divide into shells or ramekins, and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.
5. Place filled shells on a baking sheet and broil about 3 inches from the heat for 5 minutes or until the cheese has melted and the sauce turns golden and bubbling. Garnish with lemon wedges and bay leaves and serve.

Be careful—the shells or ramekins will be very hot when they come out of the broiler. Make sure your guests don't try to pick them up with their bare hands.

If you really want to treat yourself to a rich delight, you can make this into a main course by keeping them all to yourself and serving along with a green salad, fresh bread, and a crisp white wine.



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