Think of clams as self-contained steamers. When you heat boiling water inside their shells, the meat cooks perfectly. Buy littleneck, middle neck, and top neck in equal amounts. Drop them in boiling water; only the littleneck needs to be boiled longer. Then add them to a pot on the stovetop, covered. The top neck takes about 7 minutes, the littleneck 5 minutes, and the middle neck 4 minutes. The shells should open wide when they're ready; if not, remove them from the heat and try again. Use a deep pot, and, if necessary, add a little more water. If you don't have a steamer basket, place a trivet in the pot, and use a ring or a wire rack to help keep the shells in place.