



Cold Poached Pacific Cod with Spices

By MARTHA ROSE SHULMAN AUG. 11, 2014

In the authentic Middle Eastern version of this fragrant/spicy dish, a whole fish is filleted, the bones are used to make a fish stock, and the fish fillets are rubbed with a spice mix and poached in the stock. But fillets off the bone are easier to find than whole fish, and Pacific cod is a good choice. I used a vinegar court-bouillon, an easy, lighter fish poaching stock to throw together. Alternatively, use a fish stock or a plain vegetable stock. You may need to poach the fish in batches, which is fine as they are served cold.

Time: 45 minutes

1 1/2 pounds Pacific cod fillets

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1 teaspoon sweet paprika

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon ground allspice

1/2 teaspoon ground caraway

1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon cayenne (to taste)

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 onions, sliced thin

4 garlic cloves, minced or puréed

2 1/2 cups vinegar court-bouillon (recipe follows; more as needed)

3 to 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (to taste)

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

1. Slap fish fillets a few times with the flat side of a knife to break down fibers so they don't curl when you poach them. Season with salt and pepper. Combine paprika, cinnamon, allspice, caraway and cayenne and sprinkle evenly over fillets.

Using the back of a spoon, rub the spice mix into the fish. Set aside.

2. Heat the oil over medium heat in a large skillet or pot that can accommodate the fish in one layer (if you don't have a wide enough pan, fold the fillets in half or poach the fish in batches.) Add onions to the pan and cook, stirring often, until they soften, about 5 minutes. Add a generous pinch of salt and the garlic and continue to cook, stirring often, until onions are very soft, another 3 to 5 minutes. Set fish fillets, whether flat or folded, on top of onions and pour in the court-bouillon. It should just cover the fish. Add water or additional court-bouillon as necessary.

3. Bring liquid in the pan to a gentle simmer and cook for about 5 minutes. Cover pan and simmer very gently (the liquid should be barely moving) for another 5 minutes, or until fish pulls apart easily when you insert a fork. If fillets are not submerged, you can gently push them down into the stock with a spatula. Using a slotted spatula, transfer fish fillets to a platter.

4. Turn up heat and reduce liquid until thick, almost a glaze. Stir in lemon juice and spoon the mix over the fish. Add half the parsley and cilantro and allow to cool. Refrigerate if not serving within an hour.

5. Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before serving. Sprinkle fish with the remaining parsley and cilantro. Serve with rice.

Yield: Serves 4

Advance preparation: The poached fish fillets will keep for up to a day in the refrigerator. The vinegar court-bouillon will keep for a day or two in the refrigerator and can be frozen.

Vinegar Court-Bouillon

1 quart water

1/2 cup quality red wine vinegar or sherry vinegar

1 onion, sliced

2 leeks, cleaned and sliced

1 carrot, sliced

1 stalk celery, sliced

2 whole garlic cloves, peeled

A bouquet garni made with 1 sprig each parsley and thyme, and a bay leaf

6 peppercorns

Salt to taste

1. Combine all ingredients except peppercorns in a large saucepan. Bring to boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 30 minutes. Add peppercorns, simmer for another 15 minutes and remove from heat. Place a strainer over bowl and strain broth. Freeze what you don't use for poaching the fish.

Nutritional information per serving: 233 calories; 8 grams fat; 1 gram saturated fat; 2 grams polyunsaturated fat; 5 grams monounsaturated fat; 73 milligrams cholesterol; 8 grams carbohydrates; 2 grams dietary fiber; 97 milligrams sodium (does not include salt to taste); 31 grams protein

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