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FRESH CATCH

Written by Melissa Corbin

Fresh-off-the-boat seafood is always choice. Better yet, sustainable seafood “remains one of the most environmentally efficient sources of protein on the planet,” according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). As the dog days of summer quickly approach chefs along the Eastern Seaboard boast their region’s fresh catch of the day. From choosing the right catch to the actual preparation, these three chefs help you navigate uncertain waters with ease.



Specializing in fresh-made pasta, **Chef Mike Pirolo** of *Macchialina* in Miami Beach, Florida builds his menu around “what looks good that day.” He emphasizes the importance of having a good relationship with your local fishmonger and to pay close attention to the monger’s cut sheet. And, when you’re looking for freshness, “it’s definitely the eyes not being cloudy and the gills should be bright, bright red. Fish are beautiful species.” While he’s looking forward to stone crabs coming into season this October, he enjoys working with Yellowtail Snapper during the summer as it works well with lighter fare due to its light, flaky texture. Most commonly found in reefs from Florida to Brazil, this colorful fish is often spotted by divers and snorkelers. And, while it’s most often caught in warmer months, it is a legal catch year-round.

FLORIDA SNAPPER PEPPERONATA, CRISPY FINGERINGS, CLAM GUAZETTO

- 6oz snapper filet
- 3 fingerling potatoes boiled and sliced into discs
- 2 red bell peppers (roasted peeled and sliced)
- 1 yellow onion sliced
- 6 clams
- 5 cherry tomatoes halved
- 2 cloves garlic sliced
- ¼ c chopped parsley
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Chili flakes

FOR THE PEPPERONATA

Sweat out the onion in a little olive oil and chili flakes until translucent. Add the roasted peppers and cook for 5 minutes on low heat, season with salt and set aside. In a saute pan heat some olive oil and crisp up the potatoes and season with salt. Set aside

FOR THE CLAM GUAZETTO

Place some olive oil and sliced garlic in a pan and sweat on medium-high heat until the garlic starts to color, add chili flakes, parsley cherry tomatoes, clams and 1/4c of water. Cover the pan and cook until the clams open. If it starts to dry up, add some more water. It should be broth. Set aside.

FOR THE SNAPPER

Season the snapper with salt. Heat some olive oil in a non-stick pan. Add the Snapper filet skin side down. Use your hand to press the fish down preventing it from curling cook for about 3 minutes on the skin side. Flip the fish just to finish the cooking for about 30 seconds on the flesh side

PLATING

Spoon the pepperonata onto the center of the plate and top with the crispy potatoes.

Place the snapper on top of the pepperonata and spoon the clam Guazetto over top. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and serve



On Carolina Beach in North Carolina, **Chef Craig Love** of *Surf House Oyster Bar and Surf Camp* says, “Bluefish is a sustainable fish with a price point for guests that are very approachable.” Found around the world in temperate and subtropical water except for the northern Pacific Ocean. Heavily overfished in the late 90s, active management and public awareness helped regain control of regional stock. Love says, “Don’t be afraid to aggressively smoke them if you use the recipe I am adding here, as the other recipe ingredients will mute some of that smokiness. It’s really the only way to really, really enjoy bluefish. And, it just lends itself to summer so well when you are already grilling and cooking outside as it is.” While bluefish is high in omega-3 fatty acids, the FDA recommends that children and expectant mothers should limit consumption to no more than one serving per week as its mercury and polychlorinated biphenyl levels are elevated.

SMOKED BLUEFISH DIP

- 8 oz cream cheese softened to room temperature
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp fresh thyme
- 1 shallot, minced
- 8 dashes Texas Pete hot sauce
- 1/4 c shredded fresh horseradish
- 1 to 2 skinless, smoked bluefish fillets
- salt & pepper to taste

Smoke bluefish filets ahead of time and chill. For smoking bluefish, use an offset heat source with some smoking chips. Depending on the thickness of fillets, arrange fillets on the opposite side as heat source on your grill/smoker and cook for approximately 15-20 mins. Check for doneness with an instant-read thermometer. Ideally, billow a soft, low smoke, however, don’t over-concern yourself with the amount of smoke. You can bring it back to balance by just adding a little extra lemon and cream cheese to the recipe.

Pulse all ingredients in a food processor until desired consistency. With a rubber spatula spread dip into desired containers and chill 4-6 hours. Garnish with 1 tbsp fresh basil leaves. Serve with fresh cooked, chilled, along with saltines or Ritz crackers.

feast



Chef Jason Weiner of *Almond* on Ocean Road in Bridgehampton, New York, says, "The east end of Long Island settled in the 1500s as a farming and fishing community and still is." Though the options are bountiful, Striped Bass is one of the more plentiful and sustainable catches for home chefs. "It really says 'summer' on the East End. It's super tasty, versatile, easy to cook, and best of all, it's a super sustainable seafood option," says Weiner. The fish migrate between freshwater and saltwater, native to the Atlantic coastline, and spawns in freshwater tributaries such as the Hudson River. Weiner creates dishes with this fish often, as it's accessible for nearly six months out of the year. When buying this versatile, mild-flavored fish look for bright red gills and a sweet smell.

STRIPED BASS WITH WHEAT BERRY TABOULEH, HARISSA YOGURT & BABY CARROTS

- 3 c vegetable stock
- 1 ½ c wheat berries
- 1 ½ c tightly packed picked parsley, mint & cilantro leaves
- 3 scallions thinly sliced
- 1 ½ c diced cucumbers
- 1 ½ c diced tomatoes
- ½ c lemon juice
- ½ c olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 c Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp harissa
- 4 6 oz portions Striped Bass
- 1 bunch of baby carrots (scrubbed but not peeled, split in half)
- 1 tbsp canola or other neutral oil

Simmer wheat berries and vegetable stock until the wheat berries are tender (half an hour to an hour). Strain wheat berries (save the stock for future use) and spread out on a baking tin or sheet tray. Allow to cool in the refrigerator. While the wheat berries cool, finely chop herbs. Transfer cooled wheat berries to mixing bowl. Toss with herbs, diced vegetables, olive oil, and lemon juice. Season both sides of the fish with salt and pepper. For the harissa yogurt, whisk the yogurt and harissa in a bowl. Season with salt to taste. Sear the fish skin side down on medium heat with a tablespoon of canola. After about 4 minutes flip the fish and cook another two minutes. Take the fish out of the pan and add the carrots. Gently caramelize in the pan for a couple of minutes. To serve, smear a nice dollop of the yogurt around a serving platter. Scatter the tabouleh and put the fish on top. Garnish with a little bit of the chopped herbs, roasted carrots, and a drizzle of olive oil.