

HOOKED ON FISH

Fresh. Simple. Sustainable.

Braised Halibut with Potatoes and Saffron

Martha Rose Shulman / New York Times

½ teaspoon saffron threads
2 tablespoons lightly toasted almonds
2 garlic cloves, green shoots removed, or 4 green garlic cloves
2 anchovies, rinsed
Salt and black pepper to taste
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 5- to 6-ounce halibut fillets
1 pound baby potatoes, cut in ¾-inch pieces, or small potatoes, halved and sliced about ¾-inch thick
¾ pound asparagus, trimmed and cut in 2-inch lengths
2 tablespoons minced parsley
2 tablespoons minced basil

Crush saffron threads between your fingers and place in a small bowl or ramekin. Add 1 tablespoon warm water and set aside. In a mortar and pestle, pound together almonds, garlic and anchovies along with a pinch of salt into a paste. Set aside.

In a heavy straight-sided skillet or wide saucepan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Season fish with salt and pepper. When oil is hot, sear fish for 1 minute on each side. Remove to a plate or platter.

Reduce heat to medium and add anchovy paste to pan. Cook, stirring and scraping bottom of pan, until garlic is fragrant, 30 seconds to a minute. Stir in 3 cups water and stir to deglaze bottom of pan. Add potatoes and a pinch of salt. (Don't salt to taste now or broth will become too salty when reduced later.) Bring to a boil. Add saffron with soaking water, reduce heat, cover and simmer until potatoes are just tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

Carefully add seared halibut fillets and asparagus to pan. Tip in any liquid that has accumulated on the plate or platter, and bring back to a bare simmer. Cover and poach gently for 5 minutes, or until fish is opaque and asparagus is tender. With a slotted spoon or tongs, carefully remove fish fillets to 4 warm wide soup bowls. If necessary, simmer asparagus for another minute or 2. It should be tender but not too soft.

Divide potatoes and asparagus among the bowls. Turn up heat and reduce liquid in pan by half, stirring. Taste and adjust seasoning. Stir in parsley and basil and simmer 20 to 30 seconds. Spoon broth over fish and vegetables and serve.

Serves 4

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