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by Liz Robb

Pan fried sea bass on creamed leeks



Ingredients

For the leeks:
5-6 average sized leeks
30g butter
150g double cream
Freshly grated nutmeg
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
A small handful of fresh tarragon
(Chicken or vegetable stock – optional)
For the tomatoes:
4 small clusters of tomatoes on the vine
1-2 tablespoons of olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon of brown sugar
For the fish:
4 sea bass fillets
1-2 tablespoons of olive oil
Large knob of butter
1 lemon

Preparation

1. 1. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees or 180 fan oven.
2. 2. Prepare the sea bass. With a sharp knife, trim any ragged edges off each fillet and score the skin diagonally 5-6 times. Brush both sides of the fish with a little of the oil.
3. 3. Prepare the leeks by peeling off the tough outer layers, trimming them then chopping them into small chunks. Finely chop the tarragon.
4. 4. Steam the leeks for 5-7 minutes, then rinse in cold water to refresh, patting to dry them afterwards.
5. 5. Heat the oil in a roasting pan, add the tomato clusters still on the vine [I used 3 tomatoes in each cluster but you might want 5 if they are tiny], season with salt and pepper and sprinkle just a little brown sugar on the top of the tomatoes. Place in the preheated oven and roast for 10-14 minutes, depending on the size of the tomatoes.
6. 6. Cut the butter into small pieces and melt it in a non-stick pan over a low heat. Add the leeks and cook very gently, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes or until they are soft.
7. 7. Pour the double cream into the leeks, grate in nutmeg, add the tarragon and season to taste. Stir and cook over a very low heat for a further 5 minutes. If the leeks become too dry, you may wish to add a little stock to moisten them.

8 8. At the same time as cooking the creamed leeks, heat the remaining oil and butter in a large non-stick frying pan. Into the bubbling hot oil and butter, place the prepared fish fillets in the pan with the skin downwards, gently holding them down initially in case they begin to curl. Cook for about 4 minutes, until the skin is crisp, then very carefully turn them over and cook for a few more minutes, just until the flesh is opaque through to the middle, but take care not to overcook them.

9 9. To serve, make a bed of creamed leeks on each plate and place a seabass fillet on the top. Put a cluster of roasted tomatoes on the side, spooning over a little juice from the pan. Cut the lemon into 4 wedges and place one on each plate to squeeze over the fish.

Cooks Note

A light, delicious and nutritious supper dish, lovely served alongside buttered baby new potatoes. And, especially at this time of year when tomatoes are at their best, with a side dish of ripe vine roasted tomatoes, plump and bursting with juice! And it takes very little time to prepare or to cook.

Sea bass is a delicate white-fleshed fish with a sweet subtle taste which is becoming increasingly popular, and is good for you too, containing vitamins and iron but low in fat. I was lucky enough to get it fresh from the fishmonger, who also removed the pin bones from the fillets for me, but it is easily available prepared and frozen these days. It can be baked with lemon, seasoning and herbs, such as rosemary or dill, or pan fried to give the fish a crunchy skin underneath.