

Fish in Parchment Paper – En Papillote

Preamble

I first had fish en Papillote on a trip to Paris in the early ninety's and was taken with how moist and infused with flavour the fish was. The species was Chilean Seabass (Patagonian Toothfish). This would still be my fish of choice today were it not for the species being on the endangered list due to overfishing. Additionally, due to high mercury levels, even sustainably sourced catch is no longer recommended for anything other than occasional consumption. The Paris experience first caused me to start poaching and baking fish in the oven with liquid and vegetables on top. After encountering fish en papillote once or twice at restaurants in Toronto I finally decided to experiment and make it on my own. Consequently, I've been enjoying various iterations of it for 2+ decades.

Although salmon is my current favourite, this method and 'palate' of ingredients will work with most any firm-bodied fish such as cod, halibut and flounder. The types of veggies used are important* as they give up enough liquid in cooking to keep the fish moist as it steams and cooks.

Ingredients

Ingredients	Measure	2-3 Servings **	2 Servings
Salmon – skin off or individual filets***	gm	500	300
Olive Oil	Tbsp	1	1/2
Garlic	Clove	2	1
Herbs/Spices	Tsp	3-4	1.5-2
Chopped Black/Kalamata/Green Olives	Tbsp	1	1/2-2/3
Capers	Tbsp	1	1/2-2/3
Finely chopped Preserved Lemon (available at Pusateri's or Ararat Fine Foods 1800 Avenue Rd.) or thinly sliced Fresh Lemon		1	1/2
Julienned or finely Chopped Green Onions		3	1 1/2
Julienned Sweet Red, Yellow or Orange Pepper	Medium	1/2	1/4
Sliced Cherry Tomatoes	Cup	2/3	1/3

Preparation

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees
- Lay parchment paper (38cm wide works best) on an uninsulated sheet pan longways and cut 12cm/5in. longer than your piece/s of fish
- Drizzle olive oil on the middle of the parchment and spread out some thinly sliced garlic placing fish on top

- Sprinkle fish with your favourite spice or combination of spices - I've used and enjoyed all those listed below but most often use those in bold italics
 - Italian spice mix
 - Herbes de Provence
 - Dill
 - ***Ras el Hanout***
 - ***Tandoori mix***
 - curry powder
 - ***cumin***
 - Club house '***Roasted Garlic and Peppers***' or '***Lemon and Herb one step***' seasoning
- Top fish with
 - sliced or chopped sweet pepper
 - julienned or chopped green onions
 - chopped green or black olives and capers
 - lightly salted sliced cherry tomatoes
 - I also add chopped preserved lemons or lemon slices



- Pull up long edges of parchment paper so they meet to make a 'sling'. Grasping the edges at the two points where your ingredients and fish end, carefully make a fold to allow you to roll the excess together until you've encased the fish snugly in a 'tube'***
- Twist excess at ends tightly to seal, and ensure twisted ends stand somewhat vertically to avoid leakage ****



- Place tray in oven on middle rack and cook 20-30 minutes
 - Cooking time depends on amount and thickness of fish. Most parchment paper is relatively transparent so you should be able to see moisture from the vegetables bubbling through the sides for at least 5 minutes before removing



Notes and tips

*Other veggies such as spinach, thinly sliced zucchini, or trimmed asparagus can be used as well, but they release less liquid so 1/4 to 1/3 of a cup of white wine or vegetable broth is recommended

** 15 or so years ago, Westport, the town near my cottage, had a fishmonger whose first question to customers upon being asked for fish was: "How many people are there and are they good eaters?" (sadly the premises caught fire and the business was forced to close)

***The papillote I had in Paris used a traditional half-heart shape and a series of successive multiple-folds to seal the packet. Always looking for efficiencies, not being concerned with the esthetics of the cooking envelope, and not wanting to take the time to make individual serving packets, I came up with the tube. I believe it also helps to soften the vegetables more quickly and force them to release flavour and liquid.

****I usually buy a side of salmon and freeze the tail portion of it for future use. If I am grilling, even though I use a grill topper grid, I prefer to have the skin on. For this recipe it's fine to leave the skin on and separate the flesh from it when you are serving. Nonetheless, I prefer to remove the skin as the garlic roasting on the bottom contributes more flavour to the salmon. It is ridiculously easy to skin salmon with a knife and instructions can be found on Youtube.

If I am working with a side of salmon I find the width makes it more difficult to roll up the parchment paper. I make it the piece narrower by cutting off 3-4cm of the thin side of the piece and just laying it on top of the edge I removed it from. If I am using individual filet portions I usually lay them end to end.