

Madhur Jaffrey's Grilled Whole Fish Sour & Spicy from Far Eastern Cookery

Submitted by Dr Steven Stern

I had this first many years ago before I started fly fishing. I repeat the original name for accurate attribution but it does not do the flavour justice. The fish can be grilled outdoors over charcoal about 6 ins away from the heat, or indoors. If grilling indoors ensure it is far enough away from the heat to cook through without charring. Alternatively, brown the fish on both sides then put in the oven at 180 C, gas mark 4, for about 15mins until cooked.

Ingredients:

500g/1lb 2oz fish (small salmon, trout, salmon trout, bass, sole or turbot), scaled and cleaned.
½ tsp salt
3 tbsp lime or lemon juice
1cm/½in cube fresh or 3 slices dried Galangal
1 stick fresh or 1 tbsp dried sliced lemon grass
2-3 dried hot red chillies
50g/2oz shallots or onions
90g/3½oz red pepper
1cm/½in cube fresh ginger
3 cloves garlic
¼ tsp ground turmeric
200ml/7fl oz coconut milk
about 2 tbsp vegetable oil
lime wedges, to serve

Cooking Method:

1. Cut three or four deep slightly diagonal slits across both sides of the fish. Rub ½ tsp of the salt and 1 tbsp of the lime juice over the entire fish, working the mixture well into the slits and the stomach cavity. Set aside for 20-30 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, if you are using dried galangal and dried lemongrass, put these into a cup with 4 tbsp water.
3. Crumble the dried red chillies into the water as well. Set aside for 20-30 minutes.
4. If you are using fresh galangal, peel and coarsely chop it. If you are using fresh lemongrass, cut off about 0.5cm/½in of the bulbous bottom to open it up like a brush.
5. Peel the shallots and chop them coarsely.
6. Coarsely dice the red pepper, discarding all the seeds.
7. Peel the ginger and garlic and chop them coarsely.
8. Put the soaked spices and their soaking liquid, the shallots, red pepper, ginger, garlic, turmeric and the remaining 2 tbsp lime juice and ¼ tsp salt into an electric blender. If you are using fresh galangal add it too. Blend until smooth.

9. Preheat an outdoor charcoal grill or an indoor kitchen grill.
10. Put the spice paste into a wide shallow dish large enough to hold the fish. Stir the coconut milk, add it to the paste and stir to mix.
11. Put the fish into the dish. Spoon some marinade over it, making sure that it penetrates all the slits and cavities. Set aside for 10 minutes, turning the fish over a few times during this period.
12. Brush the grill rack lightly with oil to help prevent the fish from sticking. Remove the fish from the marinade and place it on the rack about 13-15cm/5-6in from the heat source.
13. Baste the fish frequently and generously with the marinade using the lemongrass brush, if you have it. Turn the fish every 5 minutes or so if you can. Cook for about 20-30 minutes, or until the fish has cooked through. It should be nicely browned on the outside but still soft and tender inside. Do not baste during the last 5 minutes so that the spices can form a nice crust. Serve with lime wedges.

ENJOY!

Editor's Note:

I had not come across Galangal before and had to look it up. Galangal is a root from the ginger family that looks a bit like a knobbly Jerusalem artichoke. It is widely used in South-East Asian cuisine, particularly Thai cookery and is an important ingredient in Thai curry pastes. It can be bought as fresh root, dried root or dried, ground powder.

If like me you are not averse to a bit of cheating, you could substitute the Galangal, lemon grass and chillies for a jar of Tesco medium Thai curry paste which is based on these three ingredients together with spices. It may not be quite as good, but you could even go so far as to cut out stages 2 – 8 and just use the Thai curry paste, but don't tell Steven!