

Fish and Shellfish

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INTRODUCTION

Fish and shellfish are a quick and elegant meal. Their subtlety offers a wonderful palette for blending and balancing the flavors of sauces.

IAN'S SALMON WITH CREME FRAICHE AND BASIL

SERVES 2

This simple, elegant dish is from Ian McPhee, chef and owner of McPhee's in Templeton, California.

2 eight oz salmon steaks

1/4 cup fresh basil

1 cup creme fraiche

1. Roughly chop the basil and add to the creme fraiche.
2. Spread one-half the sauce on top of the salmon steaks. Reserve the other half.
3. Bake uncovered for 10 minutes in a 375 degree F oven.
4. Mix the remaining sauce with drippings and pour over the steaks.
5. Serve immediately. White wine and a salad completes the meal.

MOUSSE DE POISSON (FISH MOUSSE) WITH SAUCE NORMANDE

SERVES 8

Several types of fish can be used in making this mousse, e.g., cod, red snapper or halibut.

1-1/4 lbs fish

4 eggs

7 oz butter, softened

1 cup creme fraiche

1 tbs dry white wine

1 tsp salt

1/4 tsp pepper
2 tbs fines herbes

Sauce Normande

3 tbs butter
1 onion, thinly sliced
1 cup dry white wine or hard cider
salt and pepper
pinch of grated nutmeg
1 cup creme fraiche
a few drops of lemon juice

1. Melt 1 tablespoon of butter in a skillet. Add the onion and brown lightly over a low fire. Add the rest of the butter and continue to cook until the onions are translucent.
2. Whisk in the wine and bring to a boil. Reduce the wine by half.
3. Stir in the creme fraiche, and bring the sauce back almost to a boil.
4. Remove the pan from the heat, and add a few drops of lemon juice and nutmeg, to taste.
5. Spoon the sauce over the fish mousse, and serve.

The Mousse

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Put the fish into a food processor. Add the eggs, butter, wine and spices. Process to a puree.
3. Put the creme fraiche into a bowl. Whip gently for 1 minute.
4. Fold the pureed fish into the creme fraiche.
5. Butter the inside of 8 small ramequins, and fill with the mousse. Tap the ramequins to settle the mousse. Dot with butter. Bake in a water bath at 350 degrees F for 35 to 40 minutes.
6. To unmold, circle a knife between the mousse and ramequin. Turn over on a hot plate. Serve with Sauce Normande.

SALMON MOUSSE

MAKES ONE QUART.

Serve sliced with rye bread or top scrambled eggs with slices for breakfast. For a light lunch or supper, serve with asparagus tips dressed with vinaigrette. Chilled white wine completes the meal.

1 lb cooked salmon
1 cup creme fraiche
1 tbs fresh dill
1 packet unflavored gelatin
1/4 cup water

1. Grind the salmon in a blender or food processor. Blend in the dill.
2. Whip the creme fraiche until it is stiff.
3. Sprinkle gelatin on 1/4 cup cool water. Allow the gelatin to soften for a few minutes. Heat gently, stirring until the gelatin is dissolved.

4. Add the gelatin to the salmon mixture; mix well.
5. Fold the salmon into the whipped creme fraiche. Fold until evenly mixed.
6. Pour into a one quart mold or loaf pan.
7. Refrigerate overnight to set.

HALIBUT WITH FENNEL SAUCE

SERVES 4

4 eight oz halibut steaks
2 tbs butter
salt and pepper
1/2 cup white wine
1 cup creme fraiche
1 tbs fennel seed, freshly ground

1. The morning of the day you prepare this dish, grind the fennel seed, and stir it into the creme fraiche. Refrigerate for several hours to allow the fennel to scent the creme fraiche.
2. Put the halibut steaks in a heavy enamel or stainless steel skillet. Surround with the butter.
3. Bake the steaks in a 350 degree F oven for 8 to 10 minutes or until the steaks are done.
4. Remove the steaks from the pan and keep warm. Put the pan on a burner. (You should have about 1 cup liquid from the fish.)
5. Add the wine to the fish liquid and reduce by one half over high heat.
6. Add the creme fraiche-fennel mixture to the pan. Heat to bubbling.
7. Spoon the hot sauce over the halibut steaks, and serve.

HALIBUT WITH CREME FRAICHE AND OREGANO

Serves 4

4 halibut steaks
6 branches fresh oregano
1 cup creme fraiche
juice of 1/2 lemon
1/2 tsp black pepper

1. Mix together the creme fraiche, fresh oregano leaves, lemon juice and pepper. Smear half of this mixture onto the halibut steaks.
2. Bake uncovered for 10 minutes in a 375 degree F oven.
3. Mix the remaining creme fraiche-oregano sauce with the drippings and pour over the steaks.
4. Serve immediately with dry white wine.

MUSSELS IN CREME FRAICHE WINE SAUCE

SERVES 4

1-1/2 cups dry white wine
1/4 cup minced shallots
4 cloves garlic, minced
3 lbs mussels, cleaned

2 tbs lemon juice
1 cup creme fraiche
2 tbs minced fresh parsley
salt and pepper

1. In a pot large enough to hold the mussels, combine the wine, shallots and garlic. Bring the mixture to a boil.
2. Add the cleaned mussels to pot. Steam covered over moderate heat (about 8 minutes) until the mussels have opened. Shake the pot from time to time while the mussels are cooking.
3. Remove the mussels from the pot. Discard any that have not opened. Set the mussels aside and keep them warm.
4. Bring the liquid in the pot to a boil. Add the lemon juice. Reduce the liquid by half.
5. Add the creme fraiche and boil for 2 minutes more.
6. Stir in the parsley; add salt and pepper to taste.
7. Pour the sauce over the mussels.

Serve with lots of French bread.

MUSSELS WITH SAFFRON

SERVES 4

1 cup creme fraiche
1/2 tsp saffron threads
3 lbs mussels, cleaned
6 shallots
1 clove garlic
2 tbs butter
1 cup white wine

1. The day before, add the saffron to the creme fraiche. Stir well. Refrigerate until ready to use. Just before using, stir the mixture to distribute the saffron in the creme fraiche.
2. Chop the shallots and garlic. Place these and the butter in a pot large enough to hold the mussels. Saute for 1 minute.
3. Add the mussels and the wine. Cover the pan tightly.
4. Steam until the mussels open (about 8 minutes). Shake the pan occasionally while the mussels are steaming.
5. Remove the mussels to a large bowl. Discard any that have not opened.
6. Reduce the mussel broth to 1 cup. Add the saffron creme fraiche to the cooking juices in the pan. Heat to bubbling. Pour this sauce over the mussels.

MUSSELS WITH TOMATO SAUCE

SERVES 3

This is an adaptation of a recipe given me by a Corsican friend, Laetizia Pasquini. The quality of the tomato sauce is of utmost importance. It should be made from home grown, vine ripe tomatoes.

3 lbs mussels, cleaned
6 cloves garlic, chopped
1 large shallot, chopped

2 tbs olive oil
1 cup homemade tomato sauce
1 cup creme fraiche
4 tbs ouzo (or Pernod)
1-1/2 cup dry white wine

1. Heat the olive oil in a heavy skillet. Add the shallot and garlic. Lightly saute.
2. Add the wine and sauted garlic and shallot to a pot large enough to hold the mussels.
3. Bring the wine to a boil; add the mussels. Cover the pot, and steam the mussels (about 8 minutes). Shake the pot from time to time while the mussels are steaming.
4. Meanwhile, mix together the tomato sauce, creme fraiche and ouzo.
5. When the mussels are done, remove them to a platter. Discard any that have not opened. Keep warm.
6. Boil down the wine and mussel broth for 2 minutes. Add the tomato creme fraiche mixture. Bubble the sauce for 2 minutes longer.
7. Pour this sauce over the mussels. Serve with French bread and red wine.

SCALLOPS WITH BASIL CREAM

SERVES 4

No wine is used in this sauce. It would interfere with the taste of the fresh basil.

2 cups packed fresh basil leaves
1 cup creme fraiche
12 large sea scallops
1 tbs butter
1 tbs olive oil

1. Wash the basil leaves. Grind them in a blender or food processor. A tablespoon or two of creme fraiche may be added to assist grinding.
2. Mix together the ground basil and creme fraiche. Set aside.
3. Saute the scallops in the butter and oil for 5 minutes.
4. Add the creme fraiche-basil mixture to the pan. Stir with a spatula so that the scallops are well coated with the sauce. Bubble the sauce for 2 to 3 minutes.
5. Serve immediately with a chilled white wine.

SCALLOPS WITH DILL CREAM

SERVES 4

1 cup creme fraiche
3 tbs fresh dill
16 sea scallops
1 tbs butter
1 tbs olive oil
zest of one lemon, minced
juice of half a lemon

1. Add the dill to the creme fraiche 2 days before making this dish. Refrigerate to allow the dill to scent the creme fraiche.
2. When you are ready to prepare the dish, add the zest to the creme fraiche-dill mixture.
3. Saute the scallops in the butter and oil for 5 minutes.
4. Remove the scallops and keep warm.
5. Add the lemon juice to the liquid in the pan. Reduce this liquid by half.
6. Add the dill-infused creme fraiche, and stir well. Bubble this sauce for 1 minute.
7. Return the scallops to the pan, and turn to coat with the sauce. Cook until the scallops are heated through.
8. Serve immediately with French bread and chilled white wine.

SCALLOPS WITH GRAPEFRUIT AND BASIL CREAM

SERVES 4

This recipe was inspired by a dish done by Bill Hoppe, chef, Hoppe's Garden Bistro in Cambria.

16 sea scallops
1 tbs butter
1 cup creme fraiche
2 cups packed fresh basil leaves
juice of one grapefruit

1. Several hours in advance, chop the basil and mix into the creme fraiche. Leave at room temperature to scent the creme fraiche.
2. Saute the scallops in the butter until done, about 5 minutes. Remove the scallops from the pan; keep warm.
3. Add the grapefruit juice to the pan. Reduce by half.
4. Add the creme fraiche to the pan. Mix well and heat to bubbling.
5. Return the scallops to the pan. Turn to coat with the sauce. When the scallops have heated through, serve at once.

SCALLOPS IN SAFFRON SAUCE

SERVES 4

16 large scallops
2 tbs olive oil
1 cup creme fraiche
1/2 tsp crumbled saffron threads

1. Several hours in advance, add the saffron threads to the creme fraiche. Mix well and leave in the refrigerator so that the saffron can scent the creme fraiche. Before using, stir well so that the saffron is thoroughly mixed into the creme fraiche.
2. In a large skillet, saute the scallops in the oil for 2 minutes.
3. Add the saffron-infused creme fraiche to the skillet. Let bubble for 2 minutes. Stir to coat scallops.
4. Serve with French bread and red wine.

SHRIMP WITH SAFFRON CREME FRAICHE AND ORANGE

SERVES 4

1 cup creme fraiche
1 tsp saffron threads
zest of one orange, minced
1 lb fresh shrimp
1 tbs butter
1 tbs olive oil
1/4 cup dry white wine
juice of one-half orange

1. The day before, mix the saffron threads and orange zest with the creme fraiche. Refrigerate overnight. When you are ready to prepare the dish, remove the creme fraiche from the refrigerator, and stir well to distribute evenly the saffron and zest.
2. Place the butter and oil in a skillet large enough to hold the shrimp. Bring the butter and oil to a bubble.
3. Add the shrimp. Over medium-high heat, cook the shrimp, stirring frequently until they are done. This will take about 5 minutes.
4. Remove the shrimp from the skillet. Turn off the heat.
5. When the shrimp have cooled, remove their shells and devein them.
6. When you have finished shelling the shrimp, turn the heat on under the skillet, add the wine and a handful of shrimp shells. Boil the wine until it is reduced by half.
7. Remove the shrimp shells from the pan. Add the orange juice to the reduced wine. Boil for 1 minute.
8. Add the saffron-infused creme fraiche. Bubble the sauce for 1 minute.
9. Put the shrimp back into the sauce-filled skillet. When the shrimp are heated through, serve at once with French bread.

POTTED SHRIMP WITH MASCARPONE

SERVES 4

*8 oz mascarpone**
2 tbs minced celery
1 tsp coarsely chopped green onion
1/2 tsp dry mustard
1 cup coarsely chopped shrimp

*Creme Fraiche Mascarpone is in the Auxiliary Recipes.

1. Mix together the mascarpone, celery, green onion, and mustard. Add the shrimp.
2. Firmly press the mixture into a small pate mold or small crock. Refrigerate until cold.
3. Serve with black bread and a chilled white wine.

SHRIMP AND SCALLOPS WITH GREEN PEPPER SAUCE

SERVES 6

A dear friend and wonderful cook, Josie Walley, gave me this elegant recipe.

1-1/2 cups creme fraiche
12 large shrimp
24 large sea scallops
3 tbs olive oil
1 tbs green peppercorns packed in brine
1 large shallot, chopped
1/2 cup chopped green onions
1/2 cup Pernod
salt and pepper

1. Drain and rinse the peppercorns in cold water.
2. Peel and de-vein the shrimp. Leave the tails on. Butterfly them.
3. Heat the oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Add the shrimp and scallops. Saute for 1 minute.
4. Stir in the peppercorns, green onions and the shallot. Saute for 1 minute.
5. Remove the shrimp and scallops; keep warm.
6. Add Pernod, and reduce the liquid by half over high heat.
7. Add the creme fraiche to the pan. Stir well and reduce the sauce for 3 to 4 minutes.
8. Return the shrimp and scallops to the pan and mix well to coat.
9. Serve with French bread and champagne.