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Alaskan Cod in Sweet and Sour Pepper Sauce

By MARTHA ROSE SHULMAN

Vinegary sauce in which fish is marinated after cooking is sometimes referred to as escabeche. This one is inspired by a recipe in Yotam Ottolenghi's cookbook "Jerusalem." It is at once a sauce and vegetable side dish. Instead of frying the fish like Ottolenghi does, I oven-steam it, then bury it in the sauce.

1 1/2 pounds Alaskan cod fillets

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 large onion, halved and sliced across the grain

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

2 large red bell peppers, or 1 red pepper and 1 yellow pepper, sliced

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 teaspoons curry powder (optional)

1 14-ounce can chopped tomatoes

2 tablespoons mild honey, such as clover

4 tablespoons sherry vinegar or cider vinegar

2 bay leaves

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Line a sheet pan with foil and oil the foil. Season the fish fillets with salt and pepper and lay on the foil. Leave at room temperature while you make the sauce.
2. Heat the oil in a large skillet or casserole over medium heat and add the onion and coriander seeds. Cook, stirring often, until the onion is tender, about 5 minutes, and add the bell peppers and a generous pinch of salt. Cook, stirring often, until the peppers and onions are soft, another 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the garlic and curry powder, if using, and stir together for a minute, until fragrant. Add the tomatoes and bay leaves and cook, stirring often, until the tomatoes cook down slightly, about 8 minutes. Stir in the honey and vinegar, salt to taste and black pepper, and simmer 5 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, place a pan of just boiled water on the floor of your oven and place the baking sheet with the fish in the oven on the middle rack. Bake 10 to 15 minutes, until the fish is opaque on the surface but still slightly firm in the middle. Remove from the oven and place in the sauce. Spoon sauce over the top so that the fish is surrounded by it. Simmer for 5 minutes, until the fish is cooked through and can be pulled apart with a fork. Remove from the heat and serve, or even better, chill overnight, then gently reheat the next day.

Yield: Serves 4

Advance preparation: This is even better if you make it a day ahead. The sauce, without the fish, will keep for 3 or 4 days in the refrigerator.

Note: You can replace the honey with sugar, but I prefer the honey as long as it isn't too strong.

Nutritional information per serving: 269 calories; 8 grams fat; 1 gram saturated fat; 1 gram polyunsaturated fat; 5 grams monounsaturated fat; 67 milligrams cholesterol; 24 grams carbohydrates; 4 grams dietary fiber; 455 milligrams sodium (does not include salt to taste); 25 grams protein

Martha Rose Shulman is the author of "The Very Best of Recipes for Health."

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