

Stove Cooked Whole Fish with Fresh Vegetable(s)



TIPS:

1. I learned the whole fish cooking technique shown here from Machaca Charters **Capt. Willy Hatch** out of Falmouth Harbor, Massachusetts after a productive day fishing for black sea bass. Willy explained that most of the world cooks their fish whole, which greatly reduces waste, improves cooked fish flavor, and makes the best of common sense.

2. Choice of Vegetables: I only used fresh leek when I shot this recipe for simplicity's sake. You, however, can use any quicker cooking vegetables you prefer like bell peppers, asparagus, mushrooms (not technically a vegetable but still great), onions, garlic, zucchini, yellow squash, eggplant, etc.

Preparation Time: 7-10 minutes (depends on number and type of vegetables)

Cooking Time: about 15 minutes (depends on fish size and amount of vegetables)

Ingredients

(for 2)

1 Whole Medium Sized Fish with the Head Removed

1 Fresh Leek (or any individual or combination of vegetables as noted in Tip 2 above)

Flavorful Dry Rub (I'm using Cajun spices but any favorite dry rub will work)

Olive or Vegetable Oil

Balsamic Vinegar (adds a zesty sweet & sour flavor and can be substituted by any other vinegar)

Red (or White) Vermouth (optional, but adds depth to the flavor - can also be substituted by red or white wine)

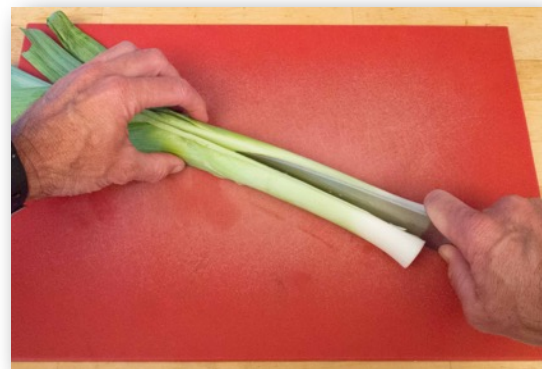


Equipment

10-12 Inch Frying Pan with Top
Tongs (or Spatula)
Large Sharp (Chef's) Knife
Cutting Board
Colander or Strainer



1. Prepare the **vegetables**. In this case, cut the **root end** from a **fresh stalk of leek**. Then cut the **leek** in half lengthwise,...



...slice the **leek stalk** in cross section into pieces $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (6-12 mm) wide, and put the **leek pieces** in a colander to make washing the **gritty soil** usually found in **leek**

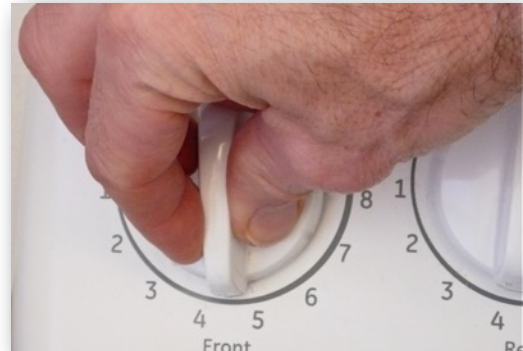
stalk sections (shown in the third picture below) as easy as possible.



Give the **leek pieces** a good hand scrubbing rinse with cold tap water until the **pieces** look about as shown in the picture to the right below.



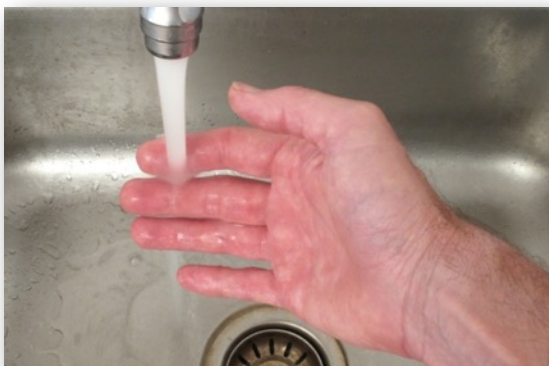
2. Put the frying on the stove, and turn on the burner to MEDIUM heat.



3. While the pan warms, rub the **skin of both sides of the fish** with **dry rub**.



4. To check the frying pan for the proper cooking temperature, wet your fingers with tap water and flick the water onto the pan surface.



The pan is warmed to the proper cooking temperature when the water sizzles on contact with the pan surface and quickly evaporates.

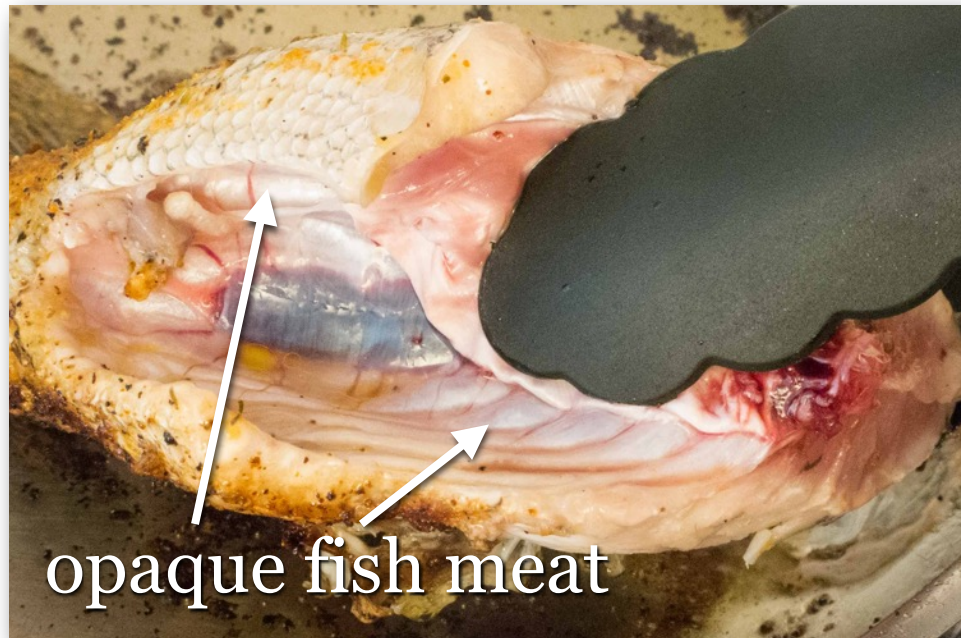
5. When the pan is warmed and ready to cook, pour in a **generous amount of olive or vegetable oil**, and put the **whole fish** into the pan.



Cover the pan with the pan top, and cook for about 5 minutes until...



...the **meat inside the fish** starts to become opaque about as shown below.



6. When the **meat inside the fish** has begun to turn opaque, use tongs (or a spatula) to turn the **whole fish** over in the pan. Then add the **chopped vegetables**, and...



...a **good shot of balsamic vinegar** and an **optional good shot of red (or white) vermouth (or wine)**.



Cover again with the pan top and cook again for about 5 minutes until...



...the **fish meat** is completely opaque as shown

below.



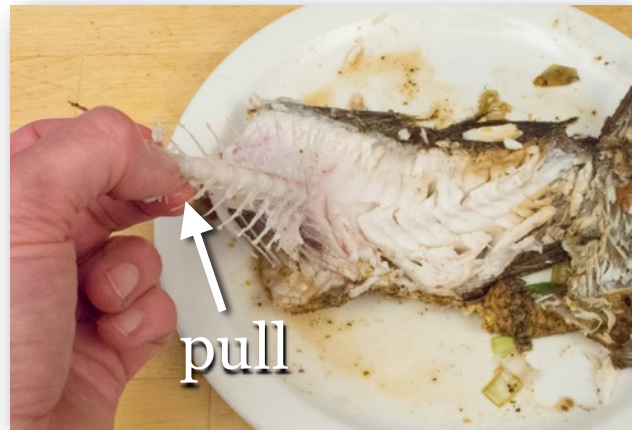
7. When the **fish meat** is cooked through to uniform opaqueness, use tongs (or a spatula) to put the **cooked fish** on a plate, and let the **vegetables** either continue to cook to desired doneness or just leave them in the pan with the stove turned off to stay warm as you separate the **fish skin** and **bones** from the **meat**.



8. Carefully use tongs (or a spatula) and a knife to pull back the **skin** from **one side of the fish**, and then just as carefully lift the **meat** from the **skeletal bones** (**NOTE:** Be careful to look for bones that might extend to the fins on the top, side, and bottom of the fish - black sea bass is full of them.).



The **central skeletal bones** should be exposed once you've removed the **meat** from one side of the **fish**. Take hold of the **spine** from the **tail end of the fish**, and lift the **spine**, hopefully in one piece, out of the **fish**.



With the **central skeletal bones** removed, leave the **fish** *skin-side down* to pull the **rest of the meat** from the **fish skin** and carefully remove any **bones** connected to **fins** (**NOTE:** This requires a bit of patience, but the reward is NOT biting into bones when eating the fish.).



When all of the **meat** is removed, all that should be left of the **fish** are just **skin** and **bones** - no waste.



9. Finish by dividing the **fish** and **cooked** vegetables...



...and serve warm.



10. To make cleanup as easy as possible, move the pan to a cool burner for a few minutes until it is comfortably safe to touch. Then add warm tap water and a squirt of dish detergent to the pan, and let the pan sit with the tongs (or spatula) in it, if necessary, for at least 10 minutes. After 10 minutes,...



...finish cleaning with a dish brush and/or sponge and rinse with warm tap water.



© 2015 Bruce Tretter
Gotta' Eat, Can't Cook
"Show Me How" Video & Picture Book Cooking