

Fish with Essaouira Chermoula

From Nelson's Kitchen
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Chermoula is a a marinate of herbs and spices and lemon that Moroccans usually have with fish. There are many versions of Chermoula. This one is from the city of Essaouira. My modification is to add Pimenta de Cheiro, a fragrant, not so hot, pepper from Brazil. Several alternative Chermoulas mention the use of a pepper that is not too hot. Just as I was researching this recipe, I read a note on Cook's Illustrated (September/October 2018, page 5) about how an enzyme in garlic, alliinase, converts a chemical compound in garlic, alliin, into another pungent compound, allicin, within thirty seconds of the garlic being cut. Quickly adding an acid to the garlic prevents this reaction, keeping the garlic mild. You want the milder garlic flavour in this fish dish. Thus speed is important when mixing the garlic with the lemon.

Ingredients:

- 1 teaspoon of cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon of coriander
- 1 teaspoon of paprika
- 2 pimenta de cheiro
- 1 teaspoon of salt or to taste
- 3 cloves of garlic, peeled
- 2 tablespoons of freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 4 tablespoons of chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 4 tablespoons of olive oil
- 4 pieces of cod fillet

Procedure:

1. Toast and grind spices:

- Cut a relatively small rectangle of parchment paper, make a folder in the paper and put it on the counter.
- Place cumin and coriander in a dry skillet.
- Place skillet over moderate heat and toast the seeds until they are fragrant.
- Immediately transfer the toasted spices to the paper.
- Use the folder to dump the spices into a coffee grinder or spice grinder.
- Grind the spices into a powder.
- If there are large pieces of shells from the coriander, you may need to sift the ground spices to remove them.

2. Prepare the Chermoula:

- Squeeze the lemon juice and strain the seeds into a small bowl.
- Place the garlic on the cutting board.
- Crush the garlic with a chef's knife.

- Acting quickly, add the the salt to the garlic and crush into a paste.
- Transfer the garlic paste to the small bowl of lemon juice and use a small spoon to stir well as soon as you can.
- Cut the pimenta de cheiro into a pulp and add to the bowl
- Cut the parsley into a very fine chop and add to the bowl.
- Dump the ground spices and the paprika into the bowl.
- Stir well

3. Marinate the fish

- About two hours before cooking dry the fish fillets well with paper towels.
- Rub the Chermoula onto the fish.
- Cover the fish with a foil and let seat, at room temperature, for two hours.

4. Saute the fish

- Warm a serving platter either in the oven or with hot water.
- Heat up a non-stick skillet until fairly hot and pour enough olive oil to just cover the bottom.
- Saute the fish making sure that it is undercooked. If making a large amount, it is specially important to undercook the initial batch as the fish continues cooking after it is removed from the pan and other hot pieces are put on top.
- As soon as each piece is done, remove to the warm serving platter.
- Pour any sauce that formed in the pan or remaining olive oil in the pan over the fish.
- Serve immediately