

Bahia Fish Moqueca

From Nelson's Kitchen
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Moqueca is a dish traditional of the Northeast coast of Brazil. It is a fish stew flavored with coconut milk, palm oil, and pepper. The palm oil is essential for the unique Moqueca flavor. The African red palm oil that is more readily found in ethnic stores in Edmonton has a stronger flavor than the one from Brazil. Thus, if using that oil, reduce the amount to 2 teaspoons (one at the start and one at the end). I prefer to use a small hot pepper from Brazil called “Pimenta de Cheiro”, literally “fragrant pepper”. It can be substituted by the preserved hot peppers typically found in Chinese stores in Edmonton.

Ingredients:

- 2 lb of firm flesh white fish fillets (cod, halibut or sea-bass)
- 1 lb of shrimp with shells
- 1 8 oz can of clam juice
- 1 can of unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1 large onion
- 1 cup of drained, seeded, and diced canned tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons of azeite de dendê (red palm oil)
- 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 1 small fresh red hot pepper
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Cilantro
- Salt and black pepper

Procedure:

1. Marinate the Fish and the shrimp

- Cut the fish into about 2 inch cubes.
- Peel the shrimp, saving the shells.
- Marinate the fish and shrimp, in separate bowls, (30 min. to 1 hour) with salt, black pepper, lemon juice, two tablespoons of finely diced onion, and a tablespoon of finely chopped cilantro.

2. Prepare the Shrimp Broth

- Add one tablespoon of vegetable oil to a hot skillet and saute the shrimp shells for a minute, add 1 cup of water and let it simmer for 3 minutes.
- Strain the shrimp shell broth.

- Mix the clam juice into the shrimp broth and reserve.

3. Prepare the Moqueca Base

- Peel, seed the peppers and cut into strips.
- Cut the onions into fine rings.
- To a hot heavy-base saucepan, add 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil and 1 tablespoon of azeite de dendê.
- Saute the bell peppers and the onions until softened.
- Add the hot pepper, salt, and black pepper.
- Add the diced tomatoes.
- Add the shrimp broth and clam juice mixture and let it simmer until the liquid reduces by half.

4. Finish the Moqueca

- Pour the coconut milk in a microwave-safe dish and warm it in the microwave until it is very hot but not boiling.
- Bring the moqueca base to a fast boil and then turn off the fire and move the pot to a cool burner.
- With a slotted spoon, lift the fish from the marinating liquid and add to the pot.
- Add the peeled shrimp.
- Cover the pot and let it seat for two minutes (or a bit longer) until the shrimp is no longer transparent and the fish is cooked.
- Add the warmed-up coconut milk.
- Add 2 tablespoons of minced cilantro.
- Add 1 tablespoon of azeite de dendê.
- Transfer the moqueca to a warm serving dish.
- Serve with white rice.