

Gulf of Mexico Rare Tuna Salad

with Fennel, Capers, and Olive Vinaigrette
serves 6

This recipe is by Chef Dean Max of Even Keel Fish & Oyster in Ft. Lauderdale. "There's something about the water which is magical to me," Max muses in the introduction to his cookbook, A Life by the Sea. "My love of food is fed from the fond memories of smells and tastes of my childhood."



Ingredients:

2 lbs sushi grade Ahi Tuna
3 Tbs tiny capers
1 each bulb fennel
4 Tbs olive oil

Black Olive Vinaigrette (page 2)

Chickpea puree:

1 lb dried chickpeas
3 quarts water
6 each cloves garlic
1 each bay leaf
1 each small onion
1 each celery rib
1 each lemon
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
Any scraps from fennel

Preparation:

Get a perfect center cut piece of #1 sushi grade tuna cut in one long log from your fishmonger. Season the tuna with salt and cracked pepper. Heat a sauté pan with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and sear the tuna on all sides for 15 seconds per side. Remove the tuna and transfer to a plate to let cool. Spoon the black olive vinaigrette on the tuna and place the tuna in the refrigerator until needed.

Place the chickpeas in a pot of cold water. Wrap the bay leaf, chopped small onion, fennel scraps, celery rib, and 4 of the cloves of garlic (smashed) in a sachet bag, cloth, or cheese cloth. You can simply put the ingredients in the water with out the bag, but you will need to fish them out later. Bring the chickpeas to a boil and turn down the flame to a very light simmer. Cook the peas until they are soft. Remove the chickpeas and puree in a blender with the 2 raw garlic cloves, lemon juice and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Keep chilled until needed.

Trim the root and tops from the fennel bulb and use them in the chickpea sachet. Slice the fennel bulb into six ½ inch slices. Drizzle the fennel with some olive oil and salt and pepper and roast in a 350-degree oven for 10 minutes on a cookie sheet.

To serve: Slice six equal portions of the tuna and spoon the vinaigrette around the plate. Serve a mound of the chickpea puree on the tuna and lay the cooled fennel against it. Brush the tuna with olive oil and sprinkle with capers.

Black Olive Vinaigrette

Yield 1 cup

3 Tbs lemon juice
1 Tbs sea salt
1 tsp ground white pepper
¼ cup pitted black olives
2 each anchovy fillets
1 Tbs capers
1 Tbs garlic confit
2 Tbs champagne vinegar
¾ cup extra virgin olive oil

Puree in the blender all the ingredients except the oil. When a nice paste has formed, drizzle in the olive oil. Keep in the blender until needed.