

Glazed Black Grouper

with Thai Sweet Rice, Baby Eggplant, Bok Choy, and Coconut Curry Sauce

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:

3 lbs	black grouper fillet	1 Tbs	butter
2 Tbs	sesame oil	20 each	baby eggplant
2 Tbs	brown sugar	2 each	shallots
4 each	green onions	2 cups	olive oil
4 oz	soy sauce	2 Tbs	honey
2 cups	sticky Thai sweet white rice	4 Tbs	balsamic vinegar
1 cup	water	1 each	sprig thyme
1 can	coconut milk	2 Tbs	coriander seed
1 Tbs	salt	1 each	bay leaf
1 head	baby bok choy		
1 Tbs	soy sauce		Grouper Glaze (page 2)
1 tsp	sesame oil		Coconut Curry Sauce (page 2)

Preparation:

Cut the grouper fillet into perfect 7-ounce pieces. Chop the scraps and sauté them with sesame oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat. Cook for 30 seconds until cooked only halfway. Transfer the grouper while hot to a bowl with the brown sugar, chopped green onions, and soy sauce, then stir it well. Let the mixture cool. Keep it in the refrigerator until you are ready to wrap the sticky rice rolls.

Score the bottom of the baby eggplant leaving them whole, but flesh exposed. Mince the shallots and warm them in a couple of tablespoons of the oil in a small pot. Add the honey and cook for 20 seconds. Deglaze with the vinegar and cook 30 more seconds. Add the thyme, eggplant, and the rest of the oil. Season the oil with salt, coriander, bay leaf, and pepper. Cook the eggplant over a very low flame for 15 minutes, or until tender. Keep in the oil until needed.

To cook the rice, place the rice, water, coconut milk, and salt in a small sauce pot and warm over medium high heat until simmering. Stir the rice every 30 seconds for 2 minutes. Lower the heat and cover the rice for the next 15 minutes. Stir the rice 4-5 times during that period. Remove the rice from the heat and let it sit covered for 10 more minutes. Lay the rice out on a sheet pan to cool at room temperature.

Lay a sheet of plastic wrap out and spoon 3 ounces of rice on to it. Flatten the rice and place a tablespoon of the grouper mixture in the middle of the rice. Pick up the edges of the plastic and fold the rice over to create a package. Twist the plastic to seal the package from any air or liquid. Keep in the refrigerator until needed. You can make these a day in advance. To heat the package before serving, you can steam or boil the rice in the plastic for 5 minutes.

Clean the grill and heat it as hot as possible. Season the grouper with salt, pepper and oil. Place the fillets on the grill for 3 minutes on each side. Glaze the fish (see below) with the sweet soy glaze and move them to the top warming rack of the grill. Let them roast there for 2 more minutes with the lid down.

In a small non-stick pan, warm the butter and the sesame oil. Add the bok choy and cook for 30 seconds. Pour in the soy sauce and sauté for 1 more minute. Remove the plastic from the rice packages and place them on the six plates. Set 3 warm eggplants on each plate. Divide the bok choy between the plates. Place a piece of fish on each plate. Spoon the chili sauce (see below) around.

Grouper Glaze

This teriyaki style glaze is perfect for adding a salty sweetness to grilled fish. It also helps to maintain moisture when grilling leaner fish.

1/2 cup	apricot preserves
1/2 cup	soy sauce
1 Tbs	sesame oil
2 Tbs	ginger (minced)
2 Tbs	ketcup manis (Indonesian soy, optional)

Warm the apricot, soy, sesame, ginger, and manis in a small pot over a low heat for 10 minutes. Whisk the mixture occasionally to create a smooth glaze. Press the glaze through a fine strainer and keep refrigerated until needed.

Coconut Curry Sauce

yield 2 cups

2 Tbs	peanut oil	6 Tbs	brown sugar
2 each	green onions, shallots	1 cup	vermouth
1 each	fresh ginger (1-inch piece)	2 cups	chicken stock
4 cloves	garlic (smashed)	2 can	coconut milk
1 stalk	lemon grass (smashed and chopped)	1 tsp	whole coriander seeds
1 each	Thai chili (chopped)	2 sprigs	thyme
1 each	bay leaf	1 each	lime (juiced)
1 Tbs	red Thai curry paste	1/2 cup	cilantro leaves (chopped)

In a small saucepot, gently saute the green onion, shallot, ginger, garlic, lemongrass with the peanut oil for a couple of minutes. Add in the curry paste and chili and continue to cook for a few minutes more. Next, put in the herbs and spices and brown sugar and cook for two more minutes. Deglaze with vermouth, and when it has cooked completely dry, add in the chicken stock and simmer for ten minutes, or until reduced by half. Pour in the coconut milk and bring it to a boil. Remove the sauce from the heat and let it cool at room temperature. Purée the sauce in a blender and strain it through a fine sieve. Reheat the sauce when needed and finish it with fresh cilantro, lime juice, and salt.