

119: Off the Hook

Grilled Redfish “On the Half-Shell” with Maître d’Hotel Butter
Haley Bittermann, Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group

Salad oil (not olive oil) for brushing onto the grill rack and fish fillets

6 redfish fillets with skin and scales still attached on one side, each 6 to 8 ounces, neatly trimmed, including removing the “belly” if still attached

1 tablespoon Creole seasoning (recipe follows)

A few tablespoons of dry white wine, if grilling in batches

Maitre d’hotel butter (recipe follows)

Clean the grill rack with a wire brush and preheat it until it is hot. Then add wet or dry hickory or other wood chips. Brush the rack with a thick wad of paper towels saturated in salad oil, holding the paper towels with long-handled tongs so you don’t burn yourself.

Place the fillets skin down on a work surface. Make sure the skinless sides are free of any loose scales. Brush the skinless side with salad oil and season each fillet evenly on the skinless side with 1/2 teaspoon Creole seasoning.

Once the grill is ready, place the fillets directly on it, skin side down, and cook until they are done, about five to eight minutes. The cooking time will vary according to the heat of the grill and the thickness of the fillets. (Watch closely so the fish does not overcook.) Do not turn over the fillets. Use a broad, large and sturdy spatula to lift each fillet from the grill at least once while cooking so that it doesn’t stick excessively. To test for doneness, insert the tip of a knife into the thickest part of a fillet to separate the flesh a little to assess if it’s cooked all the way through.

If cooking the fillets in batches, transfer the cooked fillets, skin side down, to a heat-proof platter place in a warm spot, and drizzle the fillets with white wine to keep them moist while grilling the remaining fish.

Once the fillets are cooked, serve immediately, skin side down on heated dinner plates. Top the fillets with rounds of maitre d’hotel butter, using a total of 1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons of butter for each serving.

Serves 6.

Creole Seasoning

- 1/2 cup sweet paprika
- 1/4 cup kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves

Thoroughly combine all the ingredients in a small mixing bowl and place the mixture in an airtight container. Store in a cool, dark place for up to three months. Makes about 1 cup.

Maitre d'Hotel Butter

- 1/4 pound (1 stick) unsalted butter, left at room temperature until very soft
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons minced Italian (flat leaf) parsley leaves
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced shallots
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Combine all the ingredients together in a medium-sized mixing bowl, whisking until well blended.

Use immediately or roll in waxed or parchment paper into a log that is about 5 inches long and 1 1/4 inches in diameter, then wrap the log snugly in plastic wrap. The butter will keep in the refrigerator for up to two weeks, or frozen for up to two months.

Makes about 9 tablespoons.