

**# 119: Off the Hook**

**Cast Iron Seared Gulf Fish**

**Meg Bickford, Commander's Palace**

2 heads baby bok choy  
4 ears fresh corn on the cob, in the husks  
1 Vidalia onion  
2 cups buttermilk  
2 tablespoons hot sauce  
3 eggs, beaten  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup ground bread crumbs  
12 shishito peppers  
1 shallot, small diced  
1 garlic clove, minced  
1 teaspoon chopped parsley leaves  
1 teaspoon chopped tarragon leaves  
1 teaspoon chopped cilantro leaves  
1 ounce brandy  
1 tablespoon butter  
6 black drum fillets, about 6 ounces each  
Vegetable oil  
Creole seasoning  
Kosher salt  
Black pepper  
Miso lemon vinaigrette (recipe follows)  
Creamy avocado butter (recipe follows)

Preheat a grill to medium-high and the oven to 350 degrees.

Place a perforated pan on the grill to get hot while preparing the bok choy. Cut the baby bok choy in half, lengthwise, then crosscut into thin strips about 1/4-inch thick. Rinse in cold water to remove any dirt trapped in the cabbage, then shake

dry. Place the cut bok choy in a mixing bowl and sprinkle lightly with about 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil (too much oil will result in flaming on the grill and leave your product tasting of burnt oil), salt and pepper. Toss the bok choy vigorously to coat it evenly. Pour the contents of the bowl onto the perforated grill sheet and stir continuously until the bok choy wilts and gets a little color from caramelization. Remove from the grill and set aside.

Place the corn cobs in the preheated oven to roast in their husks for about 15 minutes. Allow the corn to cool, then remove the husks and cut the kernels from the cob. Set the corn kernels aside.

Remove the top, bottom root and skin from the Vidalia onion. Cross cut the onion into thick rings, then separate the rings individually by pushing into the center of the disk. Combine the buttermilk and hot sauce in a bowl and soak the onion rings in the buttermilk for a few hours or overnight.

Place the flour in a shallow bowl and season with Creole seasoning. Strain the liquid off the onion rings and dredge them in the seasoned flour. Dip them into the beaten egg, then coat with bread crumbs, keeping the rings separated as you bread them.

Heat vegetable oil in a skillet to 350 degrees. Fry the onion rings about 3 minutes, turning them once, until golden brown. Remove from the pan and drain on paper towels. Dust with Creole seasoning and reserve.

Heat a cast iron pan over high heat until it reaches the smoking point. Add about a teaspoon of oil to the pan, then add the shishito peppers to the pan and begin sautéing them. Moving quickly, sprinkle them with salt and pepper while sautéing. The oiled peppers will spatter, so be careful.

When the peppers start to char, add the diced shallot and minced garlic. Toast the shallot and garlic for about a minute before stirring in the corn kernels. After another minute add the grilled baby bok choy and sauté together until the vegetables are heated through. Remove the pan from the heat and deglaze the pan with brandy, allowing for the alcohol to flame. When the flames subside, return the pan to the heat and while stirring, add the chopped herbs and the butter to cream out the vegetables.

Heat a cast iron pan over medium-high heat. Season the fish fillets with Creole seasoning on both sides. Add about 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil to the pan and swirl it around, to coat the bottom of pan. Place the fish in the pan “flesh side” down (opposite of the side the skin was on). Lower the heat to medium and sear

the fish about 3 minutes before gently turning the fillets over to cook for another 2 to 3 minutes (depending on the thickness of the fillets) until the fish is soft to the touch and the flesh is bright white throughout.

To serve, spoon the vegetable mixture onto the center of each dinner plate, distributing the peppers evenly to each portion of fish. Spoon the miso lemon vinaigrette on the plate around the vegetables. Place the fish on the vegetables and top with creamy avocado butter and crispy Vidalia onion rings.

Serves 4.

### **Miso Lemon Vinaigrette**

Whites from 2 eggs  
Juice from 3 lemons  
Zest from 1 lemon  
1 teaspoon white miso paste  
1 cup vegetable oil  
Kosher salt  
Granulated sugar  
Ground white pepper

Froth the egg whites in a blender or with an emersion stick until tripled in volume. With the blender running, add the lemon juice, zest and miso paste. Slowly drizzle the oil into the mixture in a constant stream. The vinaigrette will thicken as the oil is added. Season to taste with salt, sugar and white pepper.

### **Creamy Avocado Butter**

2 ripe avocados  
1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature  
1/2 teaspoon chopped parsley leaves  
1/2 teaspoon chopped tarragon leaves  
1/2 teaspoon chopped cilantro leaves  
Juice of 1 lime  
Kosher salt to taste  
Ground white pepper to taste

Cut the avocados in half around the seed pod and twist to open. Remove the fruit from the skin and pod. Discard the skin and pod, reserving only the meat of

the fruit. Pulse all the ingredients together in a food processor until smooth. For long term storage, freezing the avocado butter will keep it from oxidizing.