

Sweet Sour Crispy Snapper Recipe

Ingredients: Serves 4

Vegetable oil, for passing through
One 900g red snapper, scaled and cleaned, with head and tail intact
1 tablespoon rice wine or dry sherry
Pinch of salt
1 cup cornstarch, for coating the fish

Sauce:

¾ cup ketchup
1 cup distilled white vinegar
1 cup sugar
¼ cup cornstarch
1 red onion, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice
5 whole pitted canned lychees
5 whole pitted canned loquats
½ red capsicum, seeds and ribs removed, cut into ½-inch dice
¼ cup rice wine or dry sherry
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup thawed frozen baby green peas
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
¼ cup toasted pine nuts, for garnish

Method:

Heat a large wok over high heat. Add enough vegetable oil to come about 2 inches up the sides of the wok, and heat it to 180°C. While the oil is heating, prepare the fish: Starting right behind the gill, make four evenly spaced cuts on each side of the fish, cutting down to, but not through, the bone (this will help the fish cook evenly). Sprinkle the fish with the rice wine and the pinch of salt. Spread the cornstarch on a baking sheet or platter. Holding the fish by the tail, dip it in the cornstarch, coating it thoroughly. When the oil is ready, hold the fish by the tail and slide it gently into the wok, lowering it head-first down the side of the wok so the oil does not splash. The oil should bubble in a lively fashion. Fry the fish on one side until golden and crispy, 3 to 4 minutes. The fish slices will begin to separate and puff up. Turn the fish over, and fry the other side until golden and crispy, about 3 minutes. While the fish is frying, begin the sauce. Mix the ketchup, vinegar, sugar and ½ cup water in a medium bowl, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Mix well. Heat a small saucepan over high heat. Add the ketchup mixture and stir for 30 seconds. Set it aside. Dissolve the cornstarch in ½ cup cold water in a small bowl, and set it aside. Using a wide wire-mesh strainer, transfer the fish to a wire cake rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Discard all but 2 tablespoons of the oil from the wok. Place the fish on its belly on a platter. Using a kitchen towel, cover the top of the fish and press firmly and gently to balance the fish on its belly. Remove the towel. Return the wok with the oil to high heat. Add the onion and stir-fry for 10 seconds. Add the lychees, loquats, and capsicum and stir-fry until the pepper is crisp-tender, about 1 minute. Add the ketchup mixture and bring to the boil. Add the rice wine and salt, then the cornstarch mixture. Add the peas and stir for 10 seconds. Stir in the vegetable oil (to smooth the sauce), and cook for 10 seconds more. Pour the sauce over the fish. Sprinkle with the toasted pine nuts, and serve immediately.