

Halibut fricassee with tomato sauce

Fricassee de flétan au coulis de tomates



60-Minute Gourmet

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Almost every cook thinks it takes time – a lot of time – to prepare a good tomato sauce. A friend recently described how her grandmother made it: "She got up early, before the rest of the family, and started chopping her carrots and onions and garlic before adding her tomatoes and herbs. By the time the family got downstairs for breakfast the kitchen was alive with the good aroma of that tomato sauce, which she'd leave to simmer on the back burner all day long, once in a while adding a little broth or water to keep it from sticking." I would not argue with anybody's technique for tomato sauce, but I find that a very few minutes are necessary to prepare an excellent sauce, particularly if it is done in the French manner, as in the recipe outlined here.

1 lb skinless, boneless
halibut fillets, cut
1-in. thick
6½ tbsp butter
½ tsp finely chopped shallots
1 tsp lemon juice
Salt and pepper

1 cup peeled, seeded and diced
tomatoes
2 tbsp dry white wine
1 tbsp heavy cream
2 tbsp shredded fresh basil

1. Cut the fish fillets into 2 pieces of equal size.
2. Melt 1 tbsp butter in a small casserole large enough to hold the fish in one layer. Add the shallots and cook briefly until wilted. Remove from the heat.
3. Add the fish pieces. Sprinkle with the lemon juice, and salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
4. Melt 1½ tbsp butter in a saucepan and add the tomatoes, and salt and pepper to taste. Cook until thickened, about 2 minutes.
5. Spoon the wine over the fish. Bring to a boil. Simmer for about 1 minute, then turn the pieces of fish and simmer for a further 1 minute.
6. Carefully transfer the fish pieces to another casserole or skillet.
7. To the cooking liquid remaining in the first casserole, add the cream. Bring to a simmer and add the remaining butter, little by little, beating rapidly with a wire whisk. Add the tomato sauce and stir to blend. Stir in the basil.
8. Spoon the sauce over the fish pieces and reheat gently. **2 servings.**

Casserole from Elizabeth David, London