

Creamy Fish With Mushrooms and Bacon



Kerri Brewer for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Spencer Richards.

As the French know, wine, cream and mushrooms make almost anything taste good, and in this recipe, Melissa Clark applies the combination to delicate white fish with magnificent results. Tomatoes and bacon give it extra oomph, and the resulting sauce is so good, you'll want to splurge on good bread for sopping it up.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 4 ounces bacon (4 to 8 slices, depending on thickness), diced
- 8 ounces cremini or white mushrooms, stems discarded and caps halved or quartered
- 1 large shallot, diced
- 1 cup canned peeled whole tomatoes
- ¼ cup white wine
- 1 cup vegetable or chicken stock
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more for fish and to taste
- ¼ teaspoon finely ground black pepper, plus more for fish
- 5 tablespoons crème fraîche or heavy cream
- 5 thyme sprigs, plus ½ teaspoon thyme leaves, more for garnish
- 4 to 6 fillets black sea bass, fluke, tilefish, hake or other white fish (1¼ to 1½ pounds), skin removed
- Baguette slices or buttered toast, for serving

PREPARATION

1. Step 1

In a large oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat, cook the bacon until crisp and brown, about 5 minutes. Add mushrooms and shallot, and cook until tender and deeply golden, 5 to 8 minutes.

2. Step 2

Use your hands to crush the tomatoes or a knife to roughly chop them. Deglaze the skillet with the crushed tomatoes and their liquid, along with the wine and vegetable stock. Add the salt and pepper. Bring to a strong simmer and cook until the sauce has thickened, about 10 minutes. Taste and add more salt if needed.

3. Step 3

Whisk in 4 tablespoons crème fraîche or cream, then add thyme sprigs. Simmer for 2 to 3 more minutes or until the sauce has reduced slightly.

4. Step 4

While the sauce reduces, generously season the fillets on both sides with salt and pepper. Heat broiler on high with a rack placed 6 inches from the heat source.

5. Step 5

Place the thicker fillets toward the edge of the skillet on top of the sauce and place the thinner fillets toward the center. Some overlapping is fine. Use a spoon to scoop some of the mushroom mixture over the fillets and dollop the remaining 1 tablespoon of crème fraîche evenly over the skillet. Sprinkle with thyme leaves.

6. Step 6

Broil for 2 to 5 minutes for thin fillets and 6 to 10 for thick ones, or until the sauce is bubbling and the fillets are just cooked through. Serve garnished with thyme leaves in shallow bowls with baguette slices or buttered toast for dipping.