

Lebanese Sauteed Snapper

with Tahini Sauce & Toasted Pine Nuts

a recipe from www.maureenabood.com

This dish is in every Lebanese cookbook I own. I had never tried it until recently, because even though the Lebanese eat a lot of fish in Lebanon, they don't in Michigan. Typically the snapper is baked, but I think the dish requires the delicious flavor that pan frying imparts. Fresh fish should always glisten, have little to no scent, and be firm to the touch. Frozen fish is ideally cleaned and flash-frozen right after it is caught. Look for vacuum-packed frozen fish, which protects the delicate flesh.

For the tahini sauce:

½ cup Joyva tahini (well-stirred before measuring)
1 garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoon salt
¼ cup water
1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

For the snapper:

2 fillets red snapper
pinch of cayenne pepper
salt and pepper
1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Garnish:

2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts
1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley

Make the tahini sauce by placing the tahini, garlic and salt in the food processor. With the blade running, slowly pour in the water and lemon juice. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired. Depending on your tahini, the sauce can have a slightly bitter taste which can be corrected with more lemon juice, water, and salt.

Season the snapper with salt, pepper, and cayenne. Bring the fish to room temperature, about ½ hour.

Heat a large heavy pan over high heat. Once pan is hot, reduce heat to medium high and add the butter and olive oil. Once the butter foams up and is very hot (but not browned yet), add fillets to pan, being sure to leave space between fillets. Fillets should sizzle the moment they touch the pan. If they don't remove them and wait for pan to get hotter.

Cook fillets until browned on one side, about 3 minutes, flip them over and cook until browned and the second side and fish is opaque and flaky in the center, another 2-3 minutes.