



Broiled Mahi Mahi with Spiced Squash Puree and Maria's Mole

Recipe reprinted with permission from School of Fish by Ben Pollinger (CAS'95), executive chef, Oceana Restaurant

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE MOLE

- 1 ½ ounces whole dried mulato chiles (5 medium), stems removed, seeds left in
- 1 ounce whole dried pasilla chiles (7 medium), stems removed, seeds left in
- 1 medium shallot, peeled
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed with the side of a chef's knife and peeled
- ¼ cup white sesame seeds
- ¼ cup unsalted dry-roasted peanuts
- ¾ cup canola oil
- ¾ cup golden raisins
- ¾ cup blanched, sliced almonds
- ¼ cup animal crackers (about 6)
- ¼ medium plantain, on the turn from yellow to black (almost ripe), peeled and cut lengthwise into 4 slices
- 3 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground anise seed
- 1 quart boiling water
- 1 tablespoon fine sea salt

FOR THE SPICED SQUASH PUREE

- 1 cup dried adzuki or red beans
- Fine sea salt
- One 2-pound kabocha squash or other winter squash such as butternut
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small onion, cut into ¼-inch dice (about 1 cup)
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice

FOR THE MAHI MAHI

- Four 6- to 8-ounce boneless, skinless mahi mahi fillets (about ½ inch thick)
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 teaspoons canola oil

EXTRA CREDIT: BANANA LEAVES

At the restaurant, we line the serving plates for this dish with a banana leaf. It's an Indian thing to use banana leaves as plates, not Mexican. But there's a lot of overlap between ingredients in Indian and Mexican cuisines—spices, nuts, seeds, and chiles—so the banana leaf just made sense. It's a cool presentation to try at home, too.

DIRECTIONS

1. For the mole, heat a heavy stainless-steel or cast-iron skillet over medium heat for 4 minutes until hot. Add the mulato chiles and toast on both sides, pressing them flat with a spatula, until they're fragrant and warm enough to be pliable, about 1½ minutes. Remove to a 2-quart or larger heatproof bowl. Put the pasilla chiles in the hot skillet and toast 1½ minutes; add to the mulato chiles. Put the shallot and garlic cloves in the hot skillet and toast, stirring a couple of times, until charred, about 1 minute. Add to the chiles. Put the sesame seeds in the skillet and toast, stirring constantly, 1 minute; add to the bowl along with the peanuts. Set aside.
2. Place a large skillet over medium heat. Add ½ cup of the canola oil and heat until a few raisins added to the oil bubble gently. Add the remaining raisins and fry until plump, about 1 minute. Remove with a slotted spoon to the bowl. Add the almonds to the oil and cook until golden, about 1 minute. (Remove from the heat if they brown too quickly.) Remove with a slotted spoon to the bowl. Add the animal crackers to the oil and fry until golden brown, about 1 minute; remove to the bowl. Let the oil cool, then discard it.
3. Place a small skillet over medium heat. Add the remaining ¼ cup canola oil and heat until it shimmers. Add the plantain quarters and fry until golden on one side, about 1 minute. Turn with a spatula and fry until golden on the other side, about 1 minute more. Use the slotted spoon to remove to the bowl. Add the brown sugar, cloves, cinnamon, and anise to the oil and cook, stirring constantly, until aromatic, about 45 seconds. Do not burn. Pour into the bowl. Pour the boiling water into the bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature for 3 hours to soften the chiles.
4. Transfer the mixture to a blender or food processor and blend on high speed until smooth. Season with the salt. Store in a container at room temperature or in the refrigerator until needed.
5. For the purée, in a bowl, cover the beans with cold water by about 3 inches. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside to soak overnight at room temperature.
6. Drain the beans in a colander and rinse under cold running water. Transfer the beans to a medium saucepan and add fresh water to cover by about 3 inches. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer until the beans are tender, about 40 minutes.
7. Remove the beans from the heat, add 1 teaspoon salt, and let stand at least 15 minutes to allow the salt to penetrate. (If not using immediately, set the beans aside in the cooking liquid; the beans can be cooked the night before and refrigerated.)
8. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Cut the squash in half through the stem end and scrape out the seeds and fibers. Place the squash on the baking sheet cut side up and rub the interior with ¼ cup of the olive oil. Sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Roast until a paring knife encounters no resistance when piercing the squash, about 50 minutes. Set aside to cool to room temperature.
9. Scoop the squash flesh out of the skin. Discard the skin and set aside the flesh.
10. Place a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil and heat until fluid enough to coat the bottom of the skillet when swirled. Add the onion and garlic and cook without coloring until the onions are translucent, about 3 minutes. In a small bowl, stir together the cumin, coriander, and 2 tablespoons water; add to onions pan and cook, stirring constantly to prevent the spices from burning, for 1 minute.
11. Drain the beans. Add the squash flesh, beans, and ¼ cup water to the onions. Stir with a spatula, mashing, until the squash has broken down to a coarse purée and the mixture is heated through. Season with ½ teaspoon salt, pepper to taste, and the lime juice. Keep warm.
12. For the mahi mahi, adjust the rack about 4 inches from the element and preheat the broiler to high. Line a baking sheet or broiler pan with aluminum foil. On the foil, season the fish on both sides with salt and pepper. Let stand 5 minutes to allow the seasoning to penetrate.
13. Pat the fish dry with paper towels. Rub each fillet with 1 teaspoon of the canola oil. Broil, rotating the baking sheet after 4½ minutes for even cooking, to medium-well, about 7 minutes total.
14. To serve, warm the mole. Spoon 3 to 4 tablespoons into each of four shallow bowls or deep serving plates. Set a piece of mahi mahi on top and finish each plate with a spoonful of the squash purée.