

# A Way With Fish!

[cicadabay.com/oliveskitchen/a-way-with-fish/](http://cicadabay.com/oliveskitchen/a-way-with-fish/)

November 16, 2017



Cooking fish and seafood is fraught with problems: it's expensive, it's too easy to overcook, and it's too easy to swamp it with flavours. Here we present a simple way of cooking beautiful fish. It could be served very simply with some lemon wedges or with some parsley or garlic butter. Or it could be served with your favourite sauce.

Here we give a method for a creamy beurre blanc sauce which we call "sauce saumurade". It doesn't over-power and really suits the fish.

## Baked And Steamed Fish With Creamy Beurre Blanc Sauce

This recipe is based on a dish we ate at Mietta's, Melbourne, in 1990, and is one of the very best fish dishes I have ever had. The fish was fillet of barramundi and it was served in a flat soup plate surrounded by a creamy, buttery sauce. Every one of our dining companions who had it raved.

On leaving the restaurant I asked Mietta how it was done. She quickly indicated the fish had been baked over a tray of hot water so that it steamed and baked at the same time, while the sauce was like a beurre blanc sauce but with more cream and less butter. (I think she said the sauce was called "sauce saumurade" – and I assume the name was derived from the Saumur area along the Loire River in France but I have never seen a reference to such a sauce.)

We tried to recreate the whole dish the next day, though we couldn't get barramundi and instead used orange roughy (sometimes called deep sea perch or ocean perch). I think we went pretty close to Mietta's standard. Other fishes to try include coral trout, red emperor, John Dory and trevalla (blue-eye). You could also try it with Atlantic salmon or ocean trout.

Cooking the fish is easy and fairly foolproof but you still need to be careful. The challenge is to cook the fish just right so that it is not overdone nor still raw. Adjust the cooking time depending on the thickness of the fillets and allow another minute or so if any doubt but keep in mind that the fish will still cook a little more once it is removed from the oven. Try to use fillets of the same size and of fairly even thickness all the way through, otherwise remove thin ones early. Unless you really want it, remove the skin.

The sauce is more tricky. It can be prepared beforehand and reheated gently before serving – the thing to watch with the sauce is that it does not get too hot, causing the butter to separate, leaving the sauce with an oily film on top.

Preheat the oven and put the tray of boiling water in so it is nice and hot when ready to go – use a baking dish, cake tin or similar and use some type of open grill or wire rack, such as one used to cool cakes, that fits over the top of the dish or over the water but not in the water. The fish is placed on the rack over the hot water to catch the steam. The fish will be easier to remove if you place some baking paper on top of the rack. To allow steam to pass through, make some slits in the baking paper or fold it several times concertina-like and use a hole punch several times then fold back out. (Don't use foil as it will discolour the fish.)

### Baked and steamed fish:

Ingredients for four people:

- 4 fillets white fish (barramundi, orange roughy, ...)
- 2 tablespoons butter

Equipment: Baking tray and grill or wire rack. Baking paper, with several slits made through it.

Degree of difficulty: 4/5 (reasonably difficult).

Remove the fish from the fridge ten minutes or more before cooking. Trim as required. Pat dry.

Preheat oven to 220°C. Place boiling water in baking dish and place a grill or wire rack over this (but not in it); place in oven while preheating.

Melt butter then dredge fillets through to coat.

Remove the tray from the oven. Place baking paper over the grill/rack and then place the fillets on top. Replace the tray in the oven.

Cook for 10 minutes. The fish should be white, firm and almost translucent (unless you have used a pink fleshed fish). (Allow less or more time depending on the thickness of the fillets.)

Remove to warm plates. Serve immediately with "sauce saumurade" (method below)

spooned over and around. Or use your own sauce or accompaniment. Serves four.

## Sauce saumurade: Creamy beurre blanc

Ingredients for four people:

- 4 shallots (or 1/2 medium mild onion and dash of garlic) chopped very finely
- 200 ml dry white wine
- dash white pepper
- 200 ml heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter at room temperature (in cubes)
- extra lemon juice, wine, salt, pepper

Equipment: Small saucepan, whisk.

Degree of difficulty: 4/5 (reasonably difficult).

In a small saucepan, combine shallots/onions, wine and pepper. Simmer and stir until the wine is practically all absorbed (about 10 minutes) – the shallots/onions should be moist but not burned.

Add the cream and boil for a minute, whisking occasionally. Remove saucepan from heat and place on a cool surface or into cold water to reduce the temperature. The temperature needs to be reduced so that the butter, when added, will dissolve but not separate: work on the lower side of hot/warm rather than the higher side. Rewarm if necessary.

Add the butter cubes to the saucepan and briskly whisk into the cream; return to gentle heat if the butter won't dissolve. Aim for a smooth sauce. You don't want the butter to separate.

Adjust the flavour with a dash of lemon juice, extra wine, or salt and pepper. Reheat gently before serving.

(Note: In a fancy restaurant the shallots would be strained out. At home though, why not keep leave them in the sauce!)