

## 24 Chinese-style steamed seabass

The fish is sealed in a foil parcel and baked in the oven, effectively steaming in its own juices.

This recipe is adapted from one in Leith's Cookery Bible.

If you are serving 4 people rather than 2 then you can buy a second fish the same size and wrap it separately and bake the two fish together or buy a fish weighing about 1.1kg and increase the cooking time from 25 to 30 minutes.

Serves 2

### *Ingredients*

1 whole seabass weighing about 550g  
half a lemon, sliced

For the sauce

1 dessertspoon vegetable oil  
2 spring onions, trimmed and thinly sliced  
1 clove garlic, peeled and thinly sliced  
1.5cm cube of fresh root ginger peeled and thinly sliced  
3 tablespoons soy sauce  
1 tablespoon Shaohsing rice wine (you can find this in the speciality food section in a supermarket; substitute dry sherry or dry vermouth if you can't get hold of it)  
2 tablespoons water  
2 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

To garnish (optional)

2 spring onions, trimmed and thinly sliced

1. Ask your fishmonger to gut and scale the fish but leave the head and tail intact as the fish is brought to the table whole.
2. Preheat your oven to 180 degrees C fan.
3. Wash the fish in cold water and pat it dry with kitchen paper.
4. Lay out a large piece of foil on a work surface and lay the fish on it. Put the lemon slices into the cavity and fold the foil up around the fish to encase it not too tightly and crimp the edges together to form a pasty-shaped parcel.
5. Place the foil parcel onto a baking sheet and bake for 25 minutes. You can test whether the fish is cooked by prodding it carefully with a small kitchen knife and seeing whether the flesh just comes away from the bone.
6. While the fish is cooking, prepare the sauce. Heat the vegetable oil in a small saucepan, add the spring onion, garlic and ginger and cook for 1 minute.
7. Add the soy sauce, rice wine and water, bring to the boil then turn down the heat and simmer gently for about 2 minutes. Stir in the sesame oil and set the sauce aside. Reheat it to when you are ready to serve.

8. Once the fish is cooked, lift it out carefully from its foil wrappings using a pair of fish slices and/or slotted spoons and lay it onto a warmed serving dish. Don't worry if some of the skin comes off at this stage.
9. Spoon over some of the warmed sauce and, if liked, scatter over some thinly sliced spring onions and bring to the table. Serve with plain boiled rice (white or brown) and a steamed green vegetable (eg thinly shredded Savoy cabbage; pak choi, spinach; broccoli)
10. Offer the rest of the sauce separately to flavour the rice and vegetables as well as the fish.