Redfish Courtbouillon

From the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory

Source
This recipe comes from Anita Arguelles, GCRL marketing specialist, fly fisher, and food enthusiast.

Serves two to four, depending on the size of your fish.

Tips from the Cook
One of my favorite winter dishes is courtbouillon served over rice and garnished with parsley and lemons. The keys to making this flavorful and colorful dish is catching or choosing a fresh fish and preparing the Creole sauce. For our coastal cuisine, redfish or red snapper work well. Cooking a whole fish may be a little intimidating, but bully up to your cooktop and get your big-chef pants on. This recipe walks you through the challenge and your guests will “ooh” and “ahh” with delight. I’ve broken this recipe down into two steps: the sauce and the courtbouillon itself. Start with the sauce; you can make it a day ahead and store it in the refrigerator until you are ready to cook your fish.

Don’t try to make the name of this dish too fancy. Here on the Gulf Coast, we just say “coo’-be-yon.”

Creole Sauce

Ingredients
- ½ cup vegetable oil
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 small bell pepper, chopped
- 1 Tbsp garlic, minced
- 1 can diced tomatoes (14 oz)
- 2 cups fish stock (chicken or vegetable will also be fine)
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt, pepper, dried thyme, and cayenne to taste
- 1 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- Hot sauce to taste

Instructions
In a cast iron skillet or a sauté pan, heat the oil and the flour, making a blond roux, stirring constantly. A blonde roux changes from creamy white in color to a tan. Add the Cajun Trinity of chopped celery, bell pepper and onion and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the garlic and tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes. Add the stock, bay leaves and the seasonings, and simmer for 20 minutes, add more stock if
the mixture gets too thick. You are looking for a chowder type thickness. It will reduce again when you cook it with the fish.

Season to taste with salt, pepper and cayenne. Finish the sauce with Worcestershire sauce and hot sauce to taste.

To Taste: “Tasting” is the secret to serving a fine dish. The cook must sample the sauce before and after seasoning to fine tune the seasonings. I always use the “tasting spoon” process which is to taste one time with the spoon and discard the spoon for washing and getting a clean one.

**Courtbouillon**

**Ingredients**

- 1 whole redfish, red snapper, or other firm-fleshed fish, scaled, gutted and trimmed of all fins
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, liberally seasoned with salt, pepper and cayenne
- 2 Tbsps. Butter
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 Recipe Creole Sauce (above)
- 1 Lemon, thinly sliced
- 2 bunches fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 Tbsp flat-leaf (Italian) parsley, chopped
- 3 green onions, green tops sliced thin
- Serve over cooked rice

**Instructions**

Season the fish all over including in the cavity with kosher salt, black pepper and a little cayenne. Place some of the sliced lemon and the Thyme into the cavity of the fish.

Dredge the fish in the seasoned flour and warm the unsalted butter in a large cast iron skillet. If you don’t have a skillet, put this on your culinary wish list, but in the meantime you can use a large sauté pan and an oven-safe casserole dish. When the butter just starts to brown, place the fish in the pan and cook until golden brown on both sides.

Remove the fish to a plate and deglaze the pan with the white wine. Reduce the wine to 1/3 of the original liquid. Add Creole Sauce to the wine reduction and stir. Add the fish back to the pan and ladle some of the mixture over the fish.

Add the thyme and bay leaf to the pan and place some of the lemon slices on top of the fish. Cover the pan with a lid or aluminum foil and place into a 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Check the dish every 10 minutes during the cooking process. It’s easy to tell if the fish is done by taking a fork and inserting it into the thickest part. If the fish is cooked the fork will penetrate with ease. You will sense resistance if the fish is not done. Remember that fish will continue to cook in this hot dish surrounded by the Creole
sauce, so checking the fish every 10 minutes is important so that you don’t overcook the fish. After the dish is removed from the oven, spoon a little of the sauce from the pan over the fish and garnish with chopped parsley and lemon slices.

**Serving**

I like for my guests to see the whole fish (culinary showmanship) so I plate from the skillet at the table. When plating, carefully remove the fish and filet it gently, being careful to remove all bones. Serve over rice and spoon a generous serving of sauce over the fish.

This is one of a series of recipes that highlight the wealth of delicious local seafood ingredients available on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. Do you have a family favorite? Get in touch; perhaps we can add it to the collection.

Look for more Mississippi seafood recipes on the web at [www.usm.edu/gcrl/public/recipes](http://www.usm.edu/gcrl/public/recipes)

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