

WHOLE FISH

Grilled Fish with Wilted Greens and Lemon Potatoes

4 servings

I can't tell you how many times I've gone to psarotavernes (fish tavernas) in Greece and devoured impeccably grilled whole fish with nothing but olive oil and lemon juice. Each restaurant has its own fishing boat and a display case that shows off the morning's catch, and patrons inspect and select their own fish. The chosen specimen goes into the kitchen where it's cleaned and grilled, then returned whole or opened like a book with the bones removed. There's no improving on perfection.

Wilted Greens

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 pound (500 g) cooking greens, such as kale, dandelions, beet greens, or Swiss chard, thick stems removed, coarsely chopped

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

Lemon Potatoes

12 small fingerling potatoes (12 ounces/350 g)

2 garlic cloves, crushed

2 thyme sprigs

1 bay leaf

1/4 cup (60 ml) Lemon Vinaigrette

Fleur de sel and chopped parsley, for garnish

Fish and Assembly

One 2-pound (1-kg) whole fish, such as black bass, striped bass, or red snapper, cleaned

Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper

1/2 cup (125 ml) Lemon Vinaigrette (page TKK)

Chopped parsley, drained capers, and lemon wedges, for garnish

1. Wilted Greens In a medium, deep skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil until shimmering. Add the greens, a handful at a time, and cook over medium-high heat, stirring, until tender, about 5 minutes. Pour off any liquid. Season with the lemon juice, salt, pepper, and the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil.

2. Lemon Potatoes In a medium saucepan, cover the potatoes, garlic, thyme, and bay leaf with water and bring to a boil. Cook over medium-high heat until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain and let cool slightly; discard the aromatics. Cut the potatoes lengthwise in half. In a small bowl, combine the warm potatoes with the 1/4 cup (60 ml) of Lemon Vinaigrette and toss to coat. Just before serving, garnish with fleur de sel and parsley.

3. Fish and Assembly Heat a grill or a grill pan. On a platter, season the fish inside and out with salt and pepper and brush with some of the Lemon Vinaigrette. Grill over medium high heat, turning the fish once, until a cake tester inserted into the thickest part of the bottom fillet feels hot when touched to your lower lip, 8 to 10 minutes per side. Return the fish to the platter and let rest for 5 minutes.

4. Using kitchen scissors, cut off the head and tail. Remove the backbone. Slide a large chef's knife horizontally into the back of the fish and open like a book. Using tweezers, pull out the large belly bones and small pin bones. Arrange the fillets on a platter or plates. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle with Lemon Vinaigrette. Garnish with parsley and capers and serve. Pass the Lemon Potatoes, greens, lemon wedges, and remaining vinaigrette separately.

Make ahead

The greens can be prepared through Step 1 and refrigerated overnight. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Wine

Minerally Savatiano from Attica, citrusy Roditis from the Peloponnese, crisp Assyrtiko from Santorini, or fresh Robola from Cephalonia.

Talking points: