

Classic sole à la meunière

There's a good reason this method is a classic. It's quick, easy, and perfectly suited to the mild flavour of sole.

The classic French preparation for fish known as "à la meunière" rings of simplicity. The name translates as "in the style of the miller's wife," it refers to the fact that the fish is dusted with flour before cooking. The fish is sautéed in clarified butter until it's crisped and golden, and then it's finished with brown butter, lemon and parsley. The simplicity of sole meunière is illustrated by the list of ingredients. With so few elements in a dish, it's critical that the fish is the best possible quality.

Alternative species:- Plaice, Lemon sole, Dover sole, flounder, slip sole, megrim sole

Serves 4
Cost per portion
3.50-8.00 (depending
on size and species)

4 whole sole, skinned
and trimmed

240ml milk
200g plain flour,
seasoned with 1/2 tsp
salt and 1/4 tsp freshly
ground black pepper
120ml clarified butter
6 Tbsp melted unsalted
butter (not clarified)
4 Tbsp fresh lemon
juice
4 Tbsp finely chopped
fresh parsley

To make the clarified butter, Heat 220g (one block) of unsalted butter in a small, heavy saucepan over low heat. As the butter slowly melts, it will separate into a small amount of milky liquid at the bottom of the pan, a large quantity of clear liquid, and a bit of foamy white residue floating on the top. All you want is the clear liquid, which is the clarified butter. Spoon off the residue from the top and discard it. Without disturbing the white liquid (the milk solids) on the bottom, spoon or pour the clear liquid into another container. Any left from this recipe can be refrigerated and used for later dishes.

To cook the fish, arrange the fish in a shallow dish and pour the milk over them. (the milk helps to take on more flour and makes the fish crispy)

In one or two large frying pans, heat the clarified butter over medium-high heat until hot but not quite smoking. Lift a fillet from the milk, dip it into the flour, and shake off the excess. Carefully lay the fish in the hot fat. Adjust the temperature to keep the fat sizzling briskly but not burning. Cook the fish until golden on one side, about 3-4 minutes. With care, gently turn the fish over. When the second side of the fish is golden brown remove the sole, set it on paper towels to drain briefly, and arrange on the plates.

In a new pan, heat the melted whole butter carefully over medium-high heat, swirling the pan occasionally, until the butter is nutty brown; remove the pan from the heat so the butter doesn't keep cooking. Carefully add the lemon juice and parsley to the hot butter and spoon over the cooked sole. Serve immediately.