

Spicy red gurnard soup with rouille & braised fennel

Gurnard is found around the UK and the Mediterranean and available in sizes from 350g to 2.5kg – always a good value fish. Although commonly used for stocks, soups and bouillabaisse, gurnard is not a big seller despite being highly rated by a number of well-known chefs.

Although bony, this fish has a good flavour, firm textured flesh, takes strong flavours and pan fries or grills well

Serves 4

Cost per portion 2.00

For the soup

2 red gurnard approx 800g each, scaled, gutted, filleted and pin boned, reserve the heads and bones.
mild olive oil
90g carrot, finely chopped
20g celery, finely chopped
90g onion, finely chopped
80g red pepper, finely chopped
30g leek, finely sliced
1 garlic clove, chopped
1 bay leaf
sprig of thyme
100g tomatoes, chopped
2 litres fish stock
60g tomato puree
sea salt and fresh ground pepper

For the rouille

1 egg yolk
1 crushed garlic clove
1/2 tsp harissa paste
1 pinch saffron
170ml mild olive oil
50g dry mashed potato

For the braised fennel

1 large fennel bulb
1 tbsp olive oil
shot of Pernod
150ml fresh orange juice
squeeze of lemon

To serve

crusty bread and butter

To make the spicy soup, heat a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add a tbsp of olive oil then the carrot, celery, onion, red pepper, leek, garlic and herbs. Cook for 5 minutes until soft, then add the heads, bones and tomato puree. Cook for another 5 minutes stirring continuously.

Add the tomatoes, stir in and add the fish stock. Bring to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes

Remove the heads and bones the best you can. Liquidise and pass through a fine sieve. Check the consistency and reduce a little if you like it thicker. Season with sea salt and fresh ground pepper to taste

To make the rouille, whisk the egg yolk, garlic, harissa and saffron together in a bowl. Slowly add the oil while whisking constantly to form a creamy mayonnaise. Whisk in the potato until smooth and set aside.

To braise the fennel, trim the fennel (save the fennel herb). Cut into slices about 5mm thick. Fry in oil until they start to brown and soften. Add the Pernod and cook till evaporated, then add the orange juice. Let the juice evaporate over a medium heat until the fennel is sticky.

Take off the heat and season with a squeeze of lemon and sea salt. Set aside and keep warm.

To Cook the gurnard fillets, heat a non stick pan over a medium heat, add a splash of olive oil. Cook the fillets skin side down for about 3 minutes, then flip over and cook for a further 1 minute. Take the pan off the heat with the fish still in it to finish cooking in the residual heat.

To serve, place some of the braised fennel into the centre of a shallow, warmed soup bowl and pour the piping hot soup level with the fennel. Place one or two fillets of the pan fried gurnard on top and finish with a final braised fennel slice. Add a few drops of the rouille to the soup, sprinkle over the reserved fennel herb and serve with the crusty bread and butter