

I've noticed that the monkfish I buy in London exudes a huge amount of liquid as it cooks, and if left to stand for any length of time afterwards; so if you're adding it to a stew, boil the sauce down until it is very thick, before slipping in the fish, and serve as soon as it is cooked. It may be that my monkfish has been sitting around on ice for too long and has absorbed a good deal of melt-water.

Lotte Dunkerquoise

This recipe from the north of France employs beer rather than wine or a court-bouillon for poaching the monkfish, and as the basis for the sauce.

Ingredients: 2lb (900g) monkfish tail, filleted and cut into 1½in (4cm) chunks
2 sprigs of parsley
1 bay leaf
2 sprigs of thyme

Roarveg
Gas 10
35-40 mins.



SOPHIE
GRIGSON

1oz (30g) butter
3 shallots, finely chopped
3tbs tomato purée
4tbs crème fraîche or double cream
7fl oz (210ml) lager
salt and pepper

Preparation: Season the monkfish with salt and pepper. Tie the herbs together with string to make a bouquet garni.

Melt the butter in a frying pan large enough for the monkfish. Fry the shallots gently until translucent. Lay the monkfish on the shallots and tuck the bouquet garni among them. Pour the beer over, cover and simmer on a very gentle heat for 10 minutes or so until the monkfish is barely cooked. Transfer the fish to a warmed serving dish and keep warm while you finish the sauce.

Return the pan to the heat and stir in the tomato purée and cream. Boil until reduced to a moderately thick sauce. Stir in any liquid given off by the monkfish and reduce a little more if necessary. Taste and adjust seasoning, then pour over the fish and serve.

Gigot de lotte

Monkfish cooked like a leg of lamb, a *gigot*, with garlic, rosemary, white wine and olive oil. It's one of the best and simplest ways of serving it. The marinated fish can also be cooked on a barbecue.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients: 2-3lb (900-1,350g) monkfish tail
2 cloves of garlic, cut into fine shards
leaves of a small sprig of rosemary
½ red onion, sliced thinly
1 glass of dry white wine
4fl oz (110ml) extra virgin olive oil
salt and lots of freshly ground pepper

Preparation: Make slits all over the monkfish tail and push in slivers of garlic and rosemary leaves, using the handle-end of a teaspoon, or some other thin, blunt instrument. Place in a plastic bag with the onion, pour in the wine and oil, and season with a little salt and lots of pepper. Knot the bag tightly and sit it in a dish to catch any drips. Marinate for at least an hour (up to 12 in the fridge), turning the bag occasionally. If necessary, bring back to room temperature before cooking.

Remove from bag. Place the onion slices in an oven-proof dish and sit the monkfish on top. Pour on the marinade. Roast at 190C/375F/Gas Mark 5 for 25-30 minutes, basting occasionally with the pan juices.

Fried monkfish with salsa verde

My husband and I argued over this dish. He thinks the salsa verde would be better with a whole roast monkfish, whereas I think it works best with the more delicate flavour of flash-fried slices of monkfish. Either way, you will end up with more salsa verde than you need for one sitting, but it keeps in the fridge for several days, and goes well with cold or hot meats.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients: 2-3lb (900-1,350g) monkfish tail, filleted

salt and pepper
olive oil for frying
For the salsa verde: 1 large bunch of parsley
a generous handful of basil
6 tinned anchovy fillets
1oz (25g) capers
2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
1 slice stale white bread
1 shallot
3tbs white wine vinegar
5-7fl oz (190-250ml) olive oil
salt and pepper

Preparation: Tear the leaves off the parsley and basil. Tear up the bread roughly. Put leaves and bread into a processor bowl with all the remaining salsa ingredients except the oil. Whizz, gradually trickling in the oil to form a smooth sauce. Taste and adjust seasonings. It should be slightly sharp but not too acidic. If necessary, add more oil or bread to dampen the sharpness. Pour into a bowl, cover and set aside.

Slice the monkfish fillets, across the grain, into pieces about ½in (6mm) thick. Just before you eat, fry the monkfish slices briskly in olive oil over a high heat. Drain briefly on kitchen paper and serve with the salsa verde.