

Basic Tips for Cooking Fish

Selecting Seafood:

Fresh Fish

Eyes should be bright, clear and bulging. Gills should be bright red and free of slime. Flesh should be firm and elastic. Skin should be iridescent. Fish should smell fresh and mild.

Frozen Fish

Flesh should be solid and no discoloring. The wrapping should be moisture and vapor proof. There should be little or no odor.

Cooking Seafood

Baking

Cook by dry heat by placing fish on a greased baking dish. Keep fish moist and flavorful with seasoned oil, sauce or any condiment of your choice while baking. Fillets and steaks adapt easily to many recipes that require baking. Bake in a moderated oven, 350 degrees Fahrenheit, until the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Cooking time varies according to the thickness of the fish.

Broiling

Cook by direct, intense heat. Choose pan dressed fish (whole fish with the scales, entrails and usually the head, tail and fins removed), fillets or steaks. Place the fish in a single layer on a well greases broiler pan. Baste well with oil or basting sauce before and during cooking process. The surface of the fish should be four to six inches from the source of heat. Cooking time is usually eight to ten minutes. Turn thicker pieces such as pan-dressed fish, halfway through cooking time and baste.

Charcoal Broiling

Cook over hot briquettes in charcoal, electric or gas grill, select pan-dressed fish, fillets or steaks. Thick cuts are preferable. A well-greased, long handle hinged wire grill is recommended for ease in turning. Baste the fish with sauce before and during broiling. Broil approximately four to six inches from moderately hot briquettes for 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish. Fish is done when it flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Boiling

Cook by boiling. Bring water and salt (1 quart water to 2 tablespoon salt) to a boil in a large pot. Add seafood, return to a boil; reduce heat, maintaining a slow boil. Shrimp is done in two to four minutes, rock shrimp in 35 to 40 seconds, lobster and crab in 12 to 15 minutes, and fish in 8 to 10 minutes. Shellfish and fish are boiled when they are to be served with a sauce or flaked and combined with other ingredients.

Poaching

Cook in a simmering liquid, place fish in a single layer in a wide, shallow pan or fry pan. Barely cover with liquid. The liquid for poaching fish may be lightly salted water, water seasoned with herbs and spices, milk or a mixture of white wine and water. Simmer fish for five to eight minutes or until it flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Steaming

Cook by steam generated from boiling water, use a deep pan with a tight cover. If a steam cooker is not available, anything that prevents the fish from touching the water will serve as a steaming rack. The water may be plain or seasoned with various spices. Bring water to a rapid boil. Place fish on well-greased rack. Cover the pan tightly and steam for eight to ten minutes.

Deep Fat Frying

Cook in deep fat or oil; do not fill the fryer more than half full of oil. Allow room for fish and bubbling oil. Place breaded or batter dipped fish, one layer at a time, in the fry basket so the pieces do not touch. Fry in deep oil, 350 to 375 degrees Fahrenheit, until fish is brown and flakes easily when tested with a fork. Before frying additional fish, be sure the oil returns to the correct temperature.

Pan Frying

Cook in a small amount of hot oil, heat about 1/8 inch of oil in the bottom of a heavy fry pan. Place breaded fish in a single layer in the hot oil. Do not overload the pan. Fry fish at a moderate temperature until lightly browned on one side, then turn and cook on the other side until brown.

Oven Frying

Cook by dry heat in an extremely hot oven, dip fish in salted milk and coat with breading mixture of your choice. Place fish in shallow, well-greased baking pan. Pour melted fat or oil over fish and bake in extremely hot oven, 500 degree Fahrenheit, until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Fish cooked by this method does not require basting and cooking time is short.

Smoking

Cook with a covered charcoal, electric or gas grill, place fish on the grill, skin side down and baste frequently during cooking. The smoky flavor is obtained by adding water soaked wood chips to briquettes which produce smoke and lower the temperature. Cooking time varies with the weather, intensity of heat, amount of moisture in chips, type of grill and distance of fish from heat.