

Fish in Crazy Water

PESCE IN ACQUA PAZZA

From the region of Campania and a classic of Neapolitan cooking, this recipe is all about a great piece of fish cooked in a wonderfully simple way. At the beginning of the cooking everything in the pan is fairly dry, but by the time the fish is cooked there will be a simmering bath of *acqua pazza*—crazy water. This is a perfect way to cook halibut and other flaky fish like snapper, grouper, or bass. Use tomatoes that are mature but not too soft. And by rinsing off the capers, you will get seasoning from the capers, not the flavor of the brine. Serve with roasted or steamed potatoes.

Makes 4 main-course servings

The amount given with a “QB” ingredient is a suggestion. “QB” stands for “quanto basta.” It basically means in Italian “how much is needed.” It’s up to you how much or how little to use. The amount may also change due to the quality of the ingredient or how old it is.

- 4 6-ounce pieces skinless halibut filet (or other flakey fish)
- Fine sea salt QB
- Freshly cracked black pepper QB
- 2 large garlic cloves, peeled QB
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil plus more for drizzling
- 1 1/2 pounds ripe red tomatoes core removed and cut into half inch pieces
- About a tablespoon of chopped flat-leaf parsley QB
- About a tablespoon of rinsed capers QB

Season the fish on both sides with salt and pepper.

Lightly crush the garlic cloves and put in a sauté pan large enough to hold the fish in a single layer.

Add the olive oil. Heat the pan over medium heat.

Gently shake the pan when the garlic starts to sizzle and tilt it so the cloves are immersed in a pool of oil at one side. Hold the pan over the heat until the garlic is lightly browned.

Lay the pan flat on the burner and carefully place the fish in the pan, skin side down.

Tilt the pan so you can spoon some of the garlic-infused oil on top of the fish.

Add the tomatoes, parsley, and a couple tablespoons water. Season with salt and pepper.

Cover the pan and lower the heat so the liquid is gently simmering.

Mince the capers and add after a few minutes of cooking.

Continue to simmer the fish, covered, until it is opaque and slightly firm about 3-4 minutes or when the fish registers 125°F with a thermometer.

Transfer the fish with a slotted spatula to serving plates.

Spoon the tomatoes and “crazy water” in the pan over the fish.

Drizzle a little olive oil over each serving.