

Cinnamon Halibut

Halibut Cove, Alaska

The Tillions have a fish preparation for every day of the year, most of them simple roasts with olive oil and herbs. The paterfamilias, Clem Tillion, prefers cod (it has more flavor than halibut) and likes it best simmered with potatoes in cream: "I'm very New England." His family is more adventuresome. In addition to being an artist, his daughter, Marian Beck, a former commercial boat captain, owns the restaurant in Halibut Cove, and ideas and ingredients (such as the cinnamon oil that she uses to prepare shrimp) inevitably drift a few hundred yards upshore to her family's home."

¼ cup cinnamon
1 cup vegetable oil
1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
2 teaspoons Chinese chili paste, plus more to taste
2 pounds center-cut halibut fillet, skin removed
(cod, bass, and other thick, large-flake white fish also work well)
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
1 cup seeded fresh tomato, fresh or high quality canned, chopped
2 scallions, green and white part, minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

1. The day before serving, make the cinnamon oil: Use water or additional vegetable oil to moisten a paper coffee filter and arrange the filter in a strainer set over a bowl. Place the cinnamon in the strainer. Warm the oil over medium-high heat until hot, 3 to 5 minutes. Pour slowly over the cinnamon. Allow to drain for an hour, occasionally using a rubber spatula to gently push the cinnamon, pressing out any remaining oil. Add the sesame oil and chili paste, and cool the mixture completely in the refrigerator.
2. Four hours before serving, place the cod fillets in a shallow dish. Pour half the oil over the fish, rubbing each side well. Spread the minced ginger over the fish, cover with plastic wrap, and place in the refrigerator.
3. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Remove the fish from the pan, scrape off the ginger, and discard the ginger and the oil. Place the fish in a baking dish, season lightly with salt and pepper, and spread the tomato and scallions evenly over the fish. Cover with foil and bake until the fish is firm and flaky, 10 to 15 minutes depending on the thickness of the fillet. Serve with lemon and additional cinnamon oil on the side.

Serves 4 to 6

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