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Passionate about parchment

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Nothing sounds better to me than healthy, simple, quick and good when it comes to cooking weeknights.

Parchment paper is a must have in my house. I buy it two at a time to make sure I never run out and use it for baking everything except homemade french fries. For years I have seen magazine recipes for cooking “en papillote,” but I never tried it until last week. In “en papillote” cooking the food is cooked/steamed inside a pouch made of parchment paper, and in some instances aluminum foil. Most of the recipes call for fish, and since I am not fond of wet fish I completely avoided it.

Last week I bought two beautiful pieces of salmon. I had a new Martha Stewart Everyday Food issue on the table. Inside was a recipe for Salmon and Spinach in Parchment, so I decided what the heck, I would give it a try.

I'm hooked! En papillote cooking here I come. The salmon was perfectly cooked and it was a delicious meal that took all of 10 minutes to prepare, if that, and went from oven to plate in about 20 minutes. Cleanup, if you want to call it that, was crumbling up the parchment paper and throwing it away. I cheated and served it with rice I found in the Indian food section that merely had to be re-heated. Truth be told I thought I had to make it,

got it home and discovered it was precooked.

Hubby ate the whole thing.

I could kick myself now for shying away from the method all these years. And trust me, it was so good. I would not hesitate to serve it to guests; in fact I plan on it. You can put it all together ahead of time and just pop the single serving packets in the oven as you sip on a pre-dinner cocktail. What could be better than that?

In searching the web for other ideas I discovered Brette Sember. She wrote a cookbook devoted to the subject called “The Parchment Paper Cookbook” and she has a blog, [nopotcooking.com](#). I'll be checking both out.

She says fish and chicken work great, but she even has recipes for pork.

I just hope some of you are anxious to try the method.

Food Lion: Fresh salmon fillets, \$6.99 lb.; cara cara oranges, 3 lb. bag for \$2.69; Purdue Perfect Portions boneless, skinless chicken breasts, 24 ounce for \$6.99

Piggly Wiggly: Sea Best salmon fillets, 1.25 lb. package for \$6.99; whole tilapia, \$2.39 lb.; Wize Buy frozen boneless, skinless fryer chicken breasts, \$1.79 lb.

Salmon and Spinach in Parchment

Serves 4

Ingredients

8 cups baby spinach; I used regular spinach and ripped it up a bit

1 tablespoon grated orange zest

4 tablespoons orange juice

4 skinless, boneless salmon fillets

1/4 cup peeled, cut thin strips of fresh ginger

1 small shallot, thinly sliced

Course salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

Preheat oven to 400.

Using four-16 inch pieces of parchment paper — divide spinach equally and place on the center. Top with orange zest and half of the orange juice. Top each with a salmon fillet, ginger and shallots. Season with salt and pepper, then top with remaining orange juice and drizzle with olive oil.

Bring long ends of parchment paper together and fold (as you do a sandwich in wax paper) to make a seam. Tuck ends underneath to secure.

Place packets on a rimmed baking sheet — leaving space between for equal cooking.

Bake until salmon is cooked through — 15 to 18 minutes.

Transfer packets to plates if desired or using a large spatula, open packets and transfer to plates. Serve immediately.

Source: Adapted from Martha Stewart Everyday Food, April 2012

Salmon en Papillote

Ingredients per packet

1 5 – 6 oz salmon fillet section

1 small potato (2" diameter) — sliced 1/8" thick

1/2 lemon

1 Tbsp. white wine

2 sprigs fresh dill

1 1/2 Tbsp. butter

10 – 12 snow peas

Salt

Ground white pepper

Ground black pepper

Directions

Heat oven to 375F. Prepare parchment sheets.

Cook potato slices in boiling water, seasoned with salt, until tender.

Cut two thin slices from the lemon half and juice the remainder. Mix juice with the white wine.

Position salmon on half of paper. Sprinkle with salt and white pepper. Dot with pieces of butter. Place dill on salmon and layer potato slices on top. Season potato with salt and black pepper and top with lemon slices. Seal parchment envelope leaving a small opening at the pointed end.

When ready to cook, pour wine and lemon juice into the opening in the parchment and seal. Place bundle on a baking sheet and cook for 11 -12 minutes, or until done.

Mediterranean Fish en Papillote

Per serving ingredients

A handful of baby spinach

1 six-ounce fillet of firm white fish like tilapia or cod

Salt & pepper

2-3 cherry tomatoes, sliced

6 kalamata olives, pitted and roughly chopped

Several thin slices of red bell pepper

1 whole canned or frozen artichoke heart, sliced into eighths

Pinch of dried oregano, thyme and rosemary

1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil

Lemon slices for garnish

Per serving directions

Preheat the oven to 450. Using an 18-inch long piece of parchment paper or aluminum foil fold it in half, unfold, and place it on a rimmed baking sheet.

Lay the baby spinach next to the crease, leaving several inches above and below. Place the fish on top, and season well with salt & pepper.

Lay the tomato slices vertically on the fish, and scatter the olives, red pepper and artichoke slices. Sprinkle with the dried herbs then the olive oil.

Seal up the pouch by folding the parchment over on top of the fish. Starting at the top inner corner, fold and crimp the edges approximately every quarter-inch, until you've created a half-moon. Be sure the folds are well-creased, to keep the steam from pushing the pouch open in the oven. It will look like a half moon.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes. Transfer packet to the plate, and open carefully.

Serve with lemon slices.

Mediterranean Chicken En Papillote

4 servings

Ingredients

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into cubes

16 small grape tomatoes or 16 small cherry tomatoes

1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, roughly chopped

1 red pepper, yellow peppers or orange bell peppers, cut into thin strips

1/2 of a small red onion, thinly sliced

2-4 garlic cloves, crushed and finely chopped, to taste

16 kalamata olives, pitted and chopped

1/2 cup feta cheese, crumbled

Salt fresh ground black pepper

1/2 cup dry white wine

2 tablespoons olive oil

1/4 cup flat leaf parsley, chopped

1/4 cup fresh basil, torn

Fresh lemon, thinly sliced

Four large squares parchment paper

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Prepare ingredients and line them up on the counter.

Take four parchment paper squares. Starting with chicken, divide cubes among parchment sheets. Next, divide tomatoes among the squares, followed by chopped sun-dried tomatoes, pepper strips, sliced onion, chopped garlic, olives and crumbled feta.

Season each mound with salt and pepper, then dribble a little white wine and olive oil over each mound. Sprinkle in herbs; top each with a lemon slice.

To wrap packages: Pick up one corner of the parchment paper and fold over to meet opposing corner, line up the edges taking care to keep all ingredients inside the paper. Starting at one end, fold over the edges and crimp to make a fairly tight seal all the way around. Repeat. Place packages on a large, rimmed baking sheet, leaving space between for even cooking.

Slide baking sheet into preheated oven and bake 25 minutes.

While the packets are baking, make a side-dish such as plain steamed rice or quinoa.

When packets are finished, slide each onto a plate, make a tiny tear in the centre of each package so a little steam can escape (be careful of the hot steam) and serve right away.

Source: Food.com

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