

Salon | Dishwasher Salmon

since the release of my second cookbook, I have traveled around the globe being a media slut and throwing spontaneous dinner parties wherever I could rustle up a kitchen and a willing audience. The hazard of the job is that guests tend to arrive with impossibly high expectations. Instead of competing with these fantasies, I counter with culinary theatrics from my surreal bag of tricks. My trump card is salmon fillets poached in the dishwasher and topped with a brightly flavored cilantro sauce. It's simpler than it sounds, (virtually) foolproof, and it's usually a safe bet that none of the guests ordered the same thing for lunch. As a bonus, the results are melt-in-your-mouth moist.

The answers to the following (skeptically asked) questions, and the accompanying recipe are all you need to convert your own dishwasher into a multifaceted kitchen appliance.

Q: Is there any trickery involved?

A: No.

Q: How do you keep the fish from breaking up?

A: The individual-sized fillets are sealed in aluminum foil.

Q: How long does it take to cook?

A: The salmon should be run through the entire wash and dry cycle. (approximately 50 minutes for most models)

Q: Does the model make a difference?

A: No, I have poached salmon in almost every make and model. Although the temperatures and duration of the cycle vary with each make, salmon is very forgiving, and a little more or less "cooking" will not affect it greatly.

Q: Is there any special setting?

A: Yes. You need all the heat you can get. Modern dishwashers have "economy" and "cool dry" settings. These are undesirable since they are designed to conserve heat. However, on the other side of the spectrum, I have found that the "pots and pans" settings tends to be overkill.

Q: Doesn't the fish taste like soap (adding soap and dirty dishes is optional)?

A: No, not as long as the salmon is tightly sealed in the aluminum foil.

Q: Have you ever had a disaster?

A: Recently, moments before appearing on a live national morning TV show, I discovered that the heating element in the dishwasher was broken. After a quick huddle with the producer, I was forced to make the most of the situation by baking the salmon in the (gasp!) oven. To avoid this pedestrian fate, ask yourself the \$100 question: when you last unloaded the dishwasher (immediately after it completed its cycle), were the dishes hot? If the answer is yes, you are ready to poach.

Ingredients for salmon

2 tablespoons olive oil
4 6-ounce salmon fillets
4 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Heavy-duty aluminum foil

Ingredients for cilantro sauce

1 tablespoon butter
1 leek, white part only, *finely chopped and thoroughly washed*
1 shallot, *minced*
1 jalapeno chili, *seeds and membranes removed, finely diced*
2 garlic cloves, *minced*
1-1/2 cups chicken stock
2 cups lightly packed fresh cilantro leaves (*stems removed before measuring*)
3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons sour cream

SALMON

1. Cut two 12-inch pieces of aluminum foil.
2. Grease the shiny side of the foil with the oil. Place 2 fillets side by side on each square and fold up the outer edges.
3. Pour 1 tablespoon lime juice over each fillet. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Fold and pinch the aluminum foil extra tightly to create a watertight seal around each pair of fillets.
5. Place foil packets on the top rack of the dishwasher. Run dishwasher for the entire wash and dry cycle. (To heighten the theatrics, ask your guests to crowd around the dishwasher when you put the salmon in.)
6. When cycle is complete, take out salmon (in front of your disbelieving guests), discard foil, place one fillet on each plate, and spoon a generous serving of cilantro sauce over top.

CILANTRO SAUCE

1. Melt the butter over medium heat in a saute pan.
2. Add the leek, shallot, jalapeno, and garlic and saute for about 5 minutes, or until the onions are translucent but not brown.
3. Reduce heat to medium and add the stock. Simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. (Adjust heat as required to simmer.) The liquid should reduce by half.
4. Remove from heat and let cool.
5. Transfer to a blender or food processor and add the cilantro, lime juice, salt, and pepper. Puree until smooth.
6. Add the sour cream and "pulse" until mixed. Set aside.

Le Secret: Make sure the packet is airtight by pressing down on it gently with your hand. If air escapes easily, repackage.

Adventure club: Poach the salmon with yesterday's dishes and lemon-scented dishwasher detergent (I do it this way all the time).

Garnish: Cilantro sprigs.

Suggested Accompaniment: Yellow string beans, steamed and glazed with lemon juice and butter.

Alternatives:

- i) Sour cream may be replaced with yogurt.
- ii) Chicken broth may be replaced with vegetable broth (for fish-eating vegetarians).

Music To Cook By: Le Cirque de Soleil Soundtrack from Alegria

Wine: California Pinot Noir



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