

Seared Halibut with Pea Sabayon and Pancetta

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The full bodied, well-rounded Glen Moray 16 year old provides a very pleasing background note to this rich sauce and its sweetness is a vital link between the pea sabayon and the rest of the dish.

These flavours work so well together and create a very elegant dinner party dish. It is much easier to achieve than you might initially think because most of the elements can be prepared in advance.

Serves 4

Red Wine Sauce

a little olive oil for frying

50g diced pancetta

1 shallot, finely chopped

125mls red wine

125mls good beef stock

30mls Glenmoray 16 year old Malt Whisky

salt and freshly ground black pepper

a knob of butter for glazing

Fish

4 halibut fillets, 150g each, skin on (you could use cod, turbot or other firm fleshed white fish)

1 teaspoon fennel seeds

1 teaspoon mixed dried peppercorns

1 tablespoon olive oil

sea salt

400g potatoes for mash

Pea Sabayon

200g peas plus a knob of butter

2 egg yolks

125mls dry white wine

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Wilted Spinach

100g baby spinach leaves

1 teaspoon butter

freshly grated nutmeg

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Garnish

a few cooked peas for each plate

Preheat the oven to 220C/Gas 6

Heat a frying pan and gently fry the pancetta with the chopped shallot, then add the red wine and reduce by a third, add the beef stock and whisky and reduce by a further third. Season, pass through a sieve, return to a clean pan and set aside, reserving a few pieces of pancetta for decoration.

Cook the potatoes, drain, return to the hot pan, dry and mash with butter until smooth. Meanwhile make the pea purée. Cook peas in boiling salted water, drain, mix in the butter and pass through a sieve or a mouli.*

To cook the fish. Crush the fennel seeds and peppercorns in a pestle and mortar or in a bowl with the end of a rolling pin. Score the skin of the fish lightly with a sharp knife and rub both sides of the fish with a little olive oil. Sprinkle the crushed seeds, peppercorns and a little sea salt over the skin. Place the fish on a lightly oiled oven proof tray and cook in the oven, skin side up for 8 minutes.

Whilst the fish is cooking, make the pea sabayon. Place the egg yolks and wine in a heatproof bowl and whisk over simmering water in a pan, do not allow the bowl to touch the water or it will split. Whisk until the mixture reaches ribbon stage (leaves a ribbon like trail from the whisk) then fold in the pea purée and season. Next wash the spinach, do not dry, place in a hot pan with butter, salt and pepper and a little grated nutmeg, cook gently until it is only just wilted.

*You can prepare to this point a few hours in advance and reheat.

To serve

Reheat the red wine sauce, add a knob of butter and whisk in. Place the pea sabayon in the centre of each plate, carefully place a mound of mashed potato in the middle of the sabayon, top with a spoonful of wilted spinach. Lay the fish skin side up on top of the spinach and finally trickle a little red wine sauce around the outside of the dish, place a few peas and the reserved pancetta decoratively in the sauce and serve. Beautiful!