

Salmon with Fennel & White Beans – Comfort du Jour

This dish looks and tastes more extravagant than it is, and although I've named it "fish with fennel," it would be better described as fennel with fish, given that the fennel shows up in three different forms—the seeds are ground to a powder for crusting on the fillets, the vegetable is caramelized in the mélange beneath the fish, and the fronds are chopped and sprinkled on top.

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 2)

2 portions salmon*, skin removed (see notes)
1 tsp. fennel seed, ground to a rough powder
2 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 bulb fennel, sliced (should measure about 1 cup)
1 cup chopped fresh tomatoes (or canned, drained well)
1/4 cup vegetable broth + 2 Tbsp. dry white wine* (or all vegetable broth)
15 oz. can white kidney (cannellini) beans, drained and rinsed
1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
2 Tbsp. fennel fronds, chopped or minced

*NOTES

Any type of salmon (wild sockeye, king, coho, etc.) works well in this recipe, but you might also consider swapping in another fish, such as arctic char or steelhead trout, which I used the latter in this recipe. If you are not comfortable removing the skin yourself, ask the seafood clerk to do it for you.

If you use wine to deglaze the skillet, make it dry, as pinot grigio. Alternatively, I frequently reach for dry vermouth, given that I always have a bottle open in the fridge. If you prefer to not use wine, just add another splash of vegetable broth.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Using a mortar and pestle or electric spice grinder, crush the fennel seeds to a rough powder. Season the fish fillets with kosher salt and pepper, then sprinkle the fennel powder onto both sides of the fillets and press to fully adhere it.
2. Heat a large, non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add olive oil. When oil is hot and shimmering (but not smoking), lay fish fillets into pan. Cook about two minutes, then carefully turn fillets to cook the other side another two minutes. Transfer fish to a small plate and keep warm.
3. Add fennel pieces to the skillet. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté, tossing occasionally, until fennel is caramelized and tender, about five minutes.
4. Add tomatoes, then broth, plus wine. Stir until combined and liquid is simmering.
5. Add beans and mustard. Toss to combine, reduce heat to low.
6. Return fish to the pan, resting the fillets on top of the mixture. Cover and simmer on low for about 8 minutes, which is just about enough time to set the table and chop the fennel fronds.
7. Plate the meal, with fish fillet resting on top of the fennel-bean mixture. Sprinkle the chopped fennel fronds on top and serve.