

master cooking **class**

Whether reeled in from the icy waters of Port Renfrew or ordered from the local grocer, nothing compares to the taste of fresh halibut.

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Halibut's delicate
flavours shine
in this light
aromatic broth

TREVE'S WINE SUGGESTION

Poached Halibut in a Light Fish Broth

Try a medium bodied white with fresh acid and a citrus edge. You need something with a little body for the halibut, and the lemon notes will partner with both the spring veg and sevice.

A Southern Rhone **MARSANNE/ROUSSANNE** blend, or a quality Portuguese **VINHO VERDE** would work well.

THE BIG CATCH

The first time my husband returned from a chartered fishing trip I was unprepared for such a big haul and most of our precious halibut ended up hastily wrapped and tossed into the freezer. I vowed the next time the “boys” went fishing I would be ready to celebrate the Big Catch with a fish feast for family and friends.

If you’re not an angler and you’ve only seen pristine fillets, steaks or cheeks at your local grocer, you might not know that halibut are curious-looking flatfish with cartoonish eyes that migrate to one side of their bodies. Halibut have garnered some peculiar nicknames: the younger, tastier fish in the 10- to 25-pound range are referred to as “chickens,” while the older fish, some weighing hundreds of pounds, are referred to as “hippos” and “barn doors.” Whatever size halibut you bring home plan to use it right away.

Fresh is always best but frozen-at-sea trumps the “fresh” fish that has been lingering too long in your refrigerator (or your grocer’s display case). If you’ve hauled in a catch too large to be enjoyed immediately, consider having your halibut processed: vacuum-packed and flash-frozen the day it’s caught. (Most charters will arrange this for you.) It’s pricey, about \$1.50 per pound, but it will preserve the quality of your fish.

‘Huge Halibut Haul... Come Hungry!’

I’ve included three easy recipes to make the most of your precious catch: a zesty sevice appetizer, a flavourful fish stock and a lightly poached halibut in an aromatic fish broth.

Sevice is a refreshing appetizer made of raw fish marinated in citrus juice. It can be made with just about any type of fresh seafood, but I especially love it made with halibut. The acid in the citrus juice cures or “cooks” the fish, transforming its texture from soft and translucent to firm and opaque. In my cooking classes, there’s always a student who’s squeamish about eating raw fish—until the first hesitant bite. Sevice is a delicious revelation! Served in bowls or glasses, with tortillas or pita chips, sevice makes an easy, no-fuss starter.

As with all stews and broths, the flavour is in the stock. Halibut bones and collars make the best fish stock imaginable. Fortunately, most grocers and fish stores will set aside the bones if you give them a bit of notice. Making fish stock is easy: simply combine the cleaned fish bones with cold water, white wine and vegetables, and simmer for about 30 minutes. You’ll be rewarded with a tasty, milky-coloured fish stock that will enhance any seafood recipe (think risotto, bouillabaisse, fish croquettes and such). Stock freezes beautifully; you might as well make a huge batch.

Fresh halibut is so delicious it doesn’t require much tinkering. Seasoning it with salt and pepper and poaching it in your flavourful fish stock is an ideal way to appreciate halibut’s delicate flavour. Poaching fish is easy; just remember to remove it from the simmering stock before it’s fully cooked. Residual heat is often the culprit of rubbery, overcooked fish.

So, the next time the “boys” come swaggering home with an ice-chest full of halibut, be prepared to celebrate with friends. A quick email or tweet: “Huge Halibut Haul – Come Hungry!” should do the trick. After all, nothing goes better with a good fish tale than an old-fashioned fish feast.



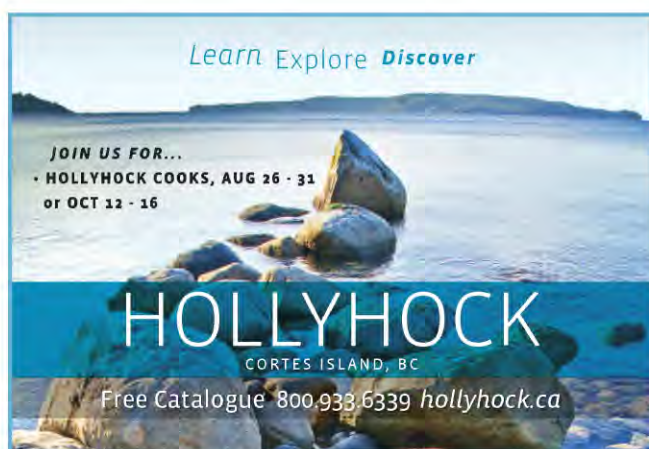
Sevice with toasted pita chips makes for a light, refreshing appetizer



Homemade fish stock enhances any seafood recipe

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POACHED HALIBUT IN A LIGHT FISH BROTH

Yield: 6 servings

2.2 pounds (1 kilogram) fresh halibut, skin removed and cut into six portions	1 Thai chili pepper, seeds removed
3 shallots, diced	Salt and pepper, to taste
4 Tbsp unsalted butter, divided in half	12 ounces (360 g) fresh green beans, topped, tailed and blanched*
½ cup white wine	¾ cup fresh peas, blanched*
6 cups home-made halibut stock	1 Tbsp butter (for the blanched vegetables)
1 fresh sprig thyme	Fresh dill or fennel sprigs for garnish

In a wide, straight-sided saucepan (deep enough to poach the halibut) saute the shallots in 2 Tbsp butter until translucent. Increase the heat and add the white wine; cook until the wine has evaporated and almost no liquid remains. Add the fish stock, thyme and chili pepper and bring the liquid to a gentle simmer. (Do not allow the liquid to boil.)

Generously season the halibut pieces with salt and pepper and add them to the simmering stock; the liquid should cover at least three-quarters of the halibut (the top portion of the halibut will be steamed). Poach, loosely covered, for about 7 minutes. To test the fish for doneness, make a small slit with a paring knife in the thickest part of the fillet; all but the center of each piece should be opaque. Remove the fish before it is completely done. Transfer the portions to warmed soup bowls and tent with foil. (The residual heat will continue cooking the fish.)

Bring the poaching stock to a boil and reduce the liquid by about half. Add a generous pinch of salt and check the seasonings. If you are satisfied with the heat from the chili, remove it from the stock. Once the seasoning has been adjusted, add 2 Tbsp of butter.

In a small pan, briefly saute the blanched vegetables in 1 Tbsp butter to warm them through. Season with salt, if necessary.

Pour the stock around the poached halibut and add the warmed vegetables. Garnish with fresh dill or fennel sprigs.

*Blanching - Place the vegetables (one variety at a time) in a large pot of generously salted water (5 teaspoons per gallon of water) for a few minutes until tender but still firm.

Remove the vegetables with a slotted spoon and transfer to a bowl of ice water. Drain once cooled.

SEVICHE

Pronounced seh-VEE-chee

Yield: 6 to 8 appetizer portions

1 ¾ pounds (800 g) fresh halibut, skin removed, diced into ¾" cubes	4 Jalapeno peppers,* finely diced
juice from 4 lemons, 4 limes, and two oranges (about 1 ½ cups of citrus juice)	2/3 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
4 large shallots, finely diced	3 Tbsp vegetable or grapeseed oil
	Salt to taste
	1 avocado, diced (optional)

*If you prefer more heat, substitute the Jalapeno peppers with Serrano peppers or, if you're really brave, Thai chilies.

Gently combine the diced fish, citrus juice and diced shallots in a glass bowl. (The halibut must be entirely covered by the citrus juice.) Cover and refrigerate for approximately 4 hours.

Drain the fish and shallots in a colander and discard the citrus juice.

In a large bowl, combine the drained fish and shallots with the peppers, cilantro, oil and a generous pinch of salt. Taste and adjust seasoning, adding additional salt and peppers if needed. Add diced avocado, if desired.

Serve the sevice with pita chips and garnish with thinly sliced cucumber.

Pita Chips Using a knife or scissors, split open a pita pocket and tear it into bite-size pieces. Place the torn pita onto a baking tray and brush the coarse side of each piece with a little vegetable oil and sprinkle with a bit of fleur de sel. Bake in a 360° F oven until lightly browned.

FISH STOCK

Yield: approx 8 cups of stock



- 2 ½ - 3 pounds fresh halibut trim, chopped into 2" - 3" chunks, rinsed in cold water, drained well
- 3 Tbsp grapeseed oil (or any mild tasting vegetable oil)
- 2 onions, roughly chopped
- 2 stalks celery, roughly chopped
- 2 leeks, white part only, roughly chopped
- 1 fennel bulb, roughly chopped
- 4 whole garlic cloves
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 bouquet garni (bouquet of herbs): bundle together with kitchen string a few sprigs of fresh thyme and a generous handful of fresh parsley, including stems
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp whole peppercorns
- Cold water

Halibut bones make the most flavourful fish stock

In a large stock pot, gently saute the onions, celery, leek, fennel and garlic in the oil over medium heat until the vegetables soften slightly, without browning. Add the wine; continue to cook until the wine has evaporated by about half. Add the fish bones and cook gently for a few minutes until the meat on the fish bones starts to turn opaque. Add the bouquet garni, bay leaves, peppercorns and enough cold water to just cover the ingredients.

Bring the stock to a gentle simmer and continue to simmer for 30 minutes. The stock should not boil.

Strain the stock (discarding the solids) and use immediately or refrigerate for up to three days. The stock can be transferred to plastic freezer bags and kept frozen for up to four months.

top shelf



MOON UNDER WATER

Down by the Bay bridge there's a new brewpub in town. Bonnie and Don Bradley, formerly founders of Bowen Island Brewing, have set up shop in the Rock Bay neighbourhood as an English-style, bar service pub crafting their own seasonal, traditional beers. Three of which are available in 650 ml bottles to take home: Moonlight Blonde Ale, Tranquility IPA and Blue Moon Bitter. All sample fresh and go from light pilsner-style to hoppy, crisp, clean to full-bodied with a dry finish. A fourth beer, Lunar Pale Ale, is only available on tap. With alcohol levels kept below 5% all the ales can be considered true "session" beers.

Available at the pub, 350B Bay Street, Victoria, www.moonunderwater.ca

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