

A Taste of Summer

SAVOR THE FLAVOR OF THE SEASON WITH THIS BRANZINO RECIPE, WHICH FEATURES CHARRED STONE FRUITS, HEIRLOOM TOMATOES, CITRUS NOTES AND CREAMY GOAT CHEESE.

BY GRAEME BLAIR

Summer is in full swing, and the culinary team is working hard on menu development to launch new offerings in all of our dining venues. The gorgeous stone fruits and tomatoes that are in season right now are highlighted in one of the dishes we are sharing this month. This recipe also uses a couple of my favorite things, previously featured in the magazine. The Benriner mandoline makes

short work of the apple and radish slaw, while the flavored olive oil brings a touch of zesty luxury to finish the dish.

This versatile dish plays well with both red and white wines for the perfect summer pairing. A lightly chilled pinot noir or a Burgundian-style chardonnay both complement and contrast different elements of the dish while catering to a variety of tastes.



BRANZINO WITH CHARRED SUMMER FRUITS & CITRUS GOAT CHEESE

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 2 nectarines
- 4 red plums
- 2 heirloom tomatoes
- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper
- 6 ounces goat cheese
- 1 lemon, zested
- 1 lime, zested
- 1 orange, zested
- 1 tablespoon lemon olive oil
- 1 green apple
- 3 radishes
- 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon parsley, minced
- 6 skin-on branzino fillets, halved
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 sprig thyme
- 2 tablespoons toasted almonds, slivered

PREPARATION

Arrange a rack in the oven in the closest position to the broiler, about 2 to 3 inches from the heating element. Turn on the broiler. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil to make cleanup easier.

Using a sharp paring knife, remove the flesh from the stone fruit and cut it into wedges from top to bottom. Cut the heirloom tomatoes in half, remove the core and slice them into four wedges per half. Arrange the tomatoes and stone fruits on the baking sheet with the cut surface facing down; we want to char part of the skin too.

Drizzle the produce with 1 tablespoon olive oil, then season with salt and pepper. Ensure the broiler is preheated, then

slide the baking sheet under the broiler. Char for 2 to 3 minutes until the skin and flesh begin to show color. (Be sure to keep an eye on this as it will go from underdone to burnt quickly. The fruit and tomato should still have texture even though it has taken on some color.) Set aside and allow to cool.

In a small bowl, combine the goat cheese with the citrus zest, lemon olive oil, salt and pepper. Mash with a fork until smooth to combine. (Tip: If you forget to pull the goat cheese from the refrigerator to soften, you can microwave it for 5 seconds at a time until it's soft and workable.) Set the mixture aside.

In another small bowl, julienne the green apple using your new favorite Benriner mandoline. (Alternatively, practice your knife skills by cutting thin slices of apple, then cutting matchstick-style pieces from the slices.) Wash and trim the stalks from the radishes, then use the root as a handle to julienne these into the same bowl. Combine 4 tablespoons olive oil with vinegar in a small bowl using a whisk (or shake in a small jar or bottle) to make a dressing. Add chopped parsley, salt, pepper and the dressing to the vegetable slaw and toss to coat.

In a large skillet (cast iron works great, though nonstick is also a reliable option), heat 1 tablespoon olive oil until the oil shimmers. Dry the branzino fillets using paper towels. Season the flesh side with salt and pepper. Place 3 of the fillet halves, skin side down, into the pan. After 15 seconds, the fish will begin to curl; remedy this by lightly pressing on the surface with a flat spatula. The fish will flatten out and the entire skin will crisp evenly. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes until the edges begin to turn opaque.

Turn the fish over, add 1 tablespoon of the butter, a smashed garlic clove and some of the thyme. Tilt the pan and, using a large spoon, baste the fish with the melted thyme-and-garlic-infused butter. The butter will foam and finish cooking the fish. This should take about another 2 minutes. Remove the fish, wipe the pan out with paper towels and repeat the above steps until all the fish has been cooked.

PLATING

Using a small pastry spatula, or the back of a spoon, spread 2 tablespoons of the goat cheese across your favorite plate in an arc. Alternate the stone fruits and heirloom tomatoes just off the center of the plate. Arrange 3 of the cooked branzino fillets on top of the charred fruit, alternating between skin up and skin down. Top with the slaw and scatter with almonds. A light drizzle of the lemon olive oil completes the dish. Enjoy.