



Saumon en Papillottes

For the Love of Good Food

This month I would like to concentrate on quick and easy and heart healthy – a good spring formula. Cooking food in packets so that the contents are gently steamed was a traditional healthy way to cook before the invention of the microwave, and unlike the microwave you can cook multiple portions at the same time with no loss of flavor. In addition serving up these packets at the table allows both you and your guests or family members to savor the delicious smell of the contents as you break them open for the first time. And, as we all know that which smells good more often tastes really good too.

This particular combination is inspired by Mediterranean and California styles of cooking. It has a freshness and intensity that is particular to California. The European twist is that the salmon packets are served with little green lentils that come from an arid region of France that give the recipe a kick and gives a nod to the fashionable Atkins type of diet – low carbs., but satisfying, nevertheless.

Ingredients (serves 4)

1 ½ cups green le Puy lentils

4 salmon filets

1 ¼ tsp salt & ¼ tsp pepper

24 (1 cup) sun-dried tomatoes in oil, finely chopped

3 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped

1/3 cup white wine

6 cups water + 1 tsp salt

4 1 inch circles waxed paper

2 baby leeks, sliced

4 tablespoons butter

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. Pick over the lentils to make sure there are no stones, rinse. Put in a large pot that is oven proof, add salt. Bring to the boil and then cover. You can cook on the stove top for 30 minutes until soft or place in the oven for 30-40 minutes or until soft. In the oven they tend to keep their shape better.
3. Take the 13-inch circles of waxed paper and crease them in the middle. Spray one half with a little oil, and then place the sliced leeks in equal proportions on the same half of the 4 circles. Cover with the salmon filets. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Mix the chopped dill with the sun-dried tomatoes and spread over the salmon filets.
5. Melt the butter in a small saucepan and add white wine. Spoon some of this mixture over each of the salmon filets.
6. Seal the packets by folding over the edges gradually and tuck the last little bit under the filet. Place on a baking tray and place in the oven for 20 minutes. The packets will puff up.
7. To serve, place each packet on a plate and spoon some of the lentils on one side. Garnish with a sprig of fresh dill. Let the diners open the packets themselves as the aroma will sharpen their enjoyment. You can also serve with a crisp green salad, for a light but flavorful spring dinner.

Suggest you accompany this dish with a light, dry refreshing drink, and if you are a wine drinker, consider a chilled Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling rather than the California Chardonnay.

NB: If you have guests the good thing is that you can prepare in advance, then bring the lentils to the boil and pop them in the oven about 40 minutes before you eat, then the fish 20 minutes later. You spend more time with the guests and cut down on the cleaning up after. What a treat!