

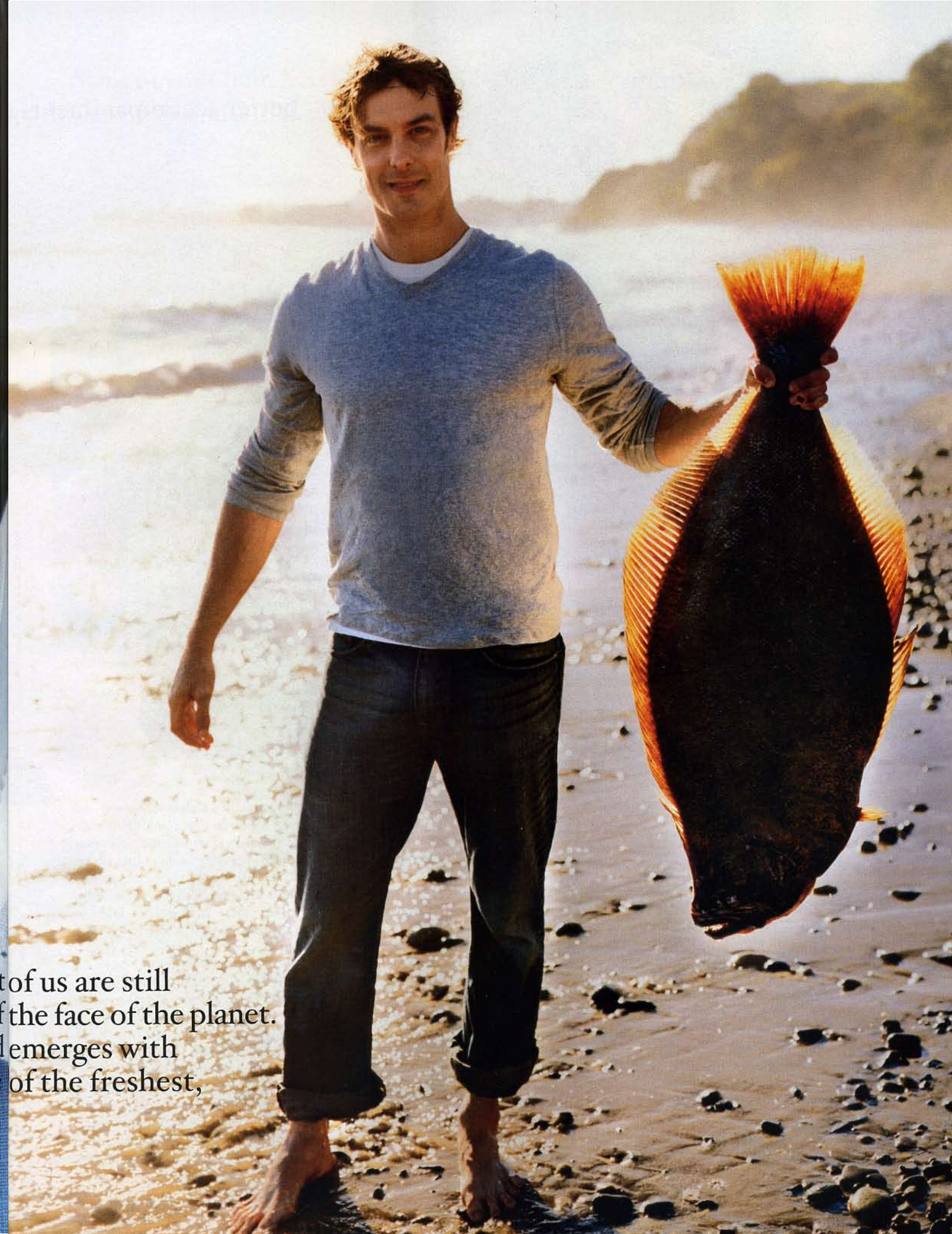


Squid, an excellent source of essential amino acids, is the basis for grilled CALAMARI with minted red peppers. *Opposite page:* Chef Barton Seaver holds up one that didn't get away: a healthful 25-pound Pacific halibut.

# Nice Catch!

Even though we're big fans of seafood—go, fish!—most of us are still wondering what's safe, what's toxic, and what's about to be fished off the face of the planet. **Celia Barbour** dives into the matter of safety and sustainability and emerges with seven guidelines. And **chef Barton Seaver** hooks you up with some of the freshest, zestiest, most mouthwatering recipes around.

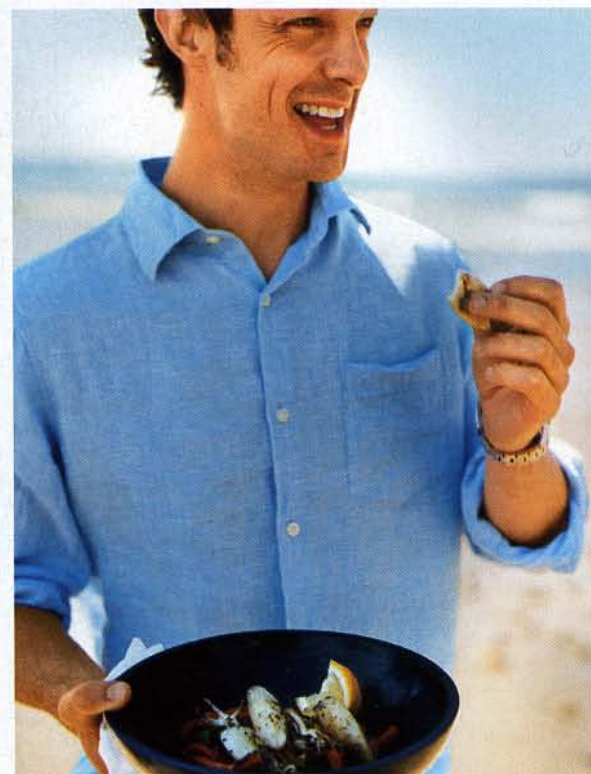
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIKKEL VANG







Sweet, plump MUSSELS, at their best from September through April, are combined with sausage, kale, and paprika in a Portuguese-style stew. *Right:* At his Washington, D.C., restaurant, Hook, Seaver serves responsibly sourced seafood.



**U**sed to be, a GONE FISHIN' sign tacked on your door meant you'd shuttered up your cares for a day and ventured someplace remote and quiet to cast your line into the cool, bountiful deep.

These days your cares are apt to come along for the ride. You reel in a flopping beauty but, hmm...perhaps you shouldn't eat it. It could be toxic with industrial contaminants, or maybe it's some drug-addled mutant escaped from an aquafarm. It could even be one of the last surviving members of an endangered species. But wait! At least you didn't kill any dolphins or loggerhead

turtles while catching it, and besides, you do need to up your intake of omega-3s.

If you're confused about fish, welcome to the club. Everyone is confused about fish and seafood these days, even the experts. Marion Nestle, PhD, is a professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University and the author of *What to Eat*, a very smart book with five whole chapters devoted to shopping for seafood. She says, "For me personally, it's just way, way too complicated. I can't keep it straight."

But here's the catch: Just because it's okay to be confused doesn't mean you're allowed to be apathetic. You have to care about the seafood you eat. You just do. (And it's surprisingly easy to do the right thing, as you'll see shortly.) Because—remember passenger pigeons? Of course not. Nineteenth-century Americans ate them by the platterful, and look how that turned

out: They're extinct. Unless you want to tell your grandchildren that you blithely gobbled up the last remaining members of a magnificent species, you should avoid certain fish and crustaceans altogether, at least until their populations recover—bluefin tuna, for example, which you may know as toro at the sushi bar, and which is wobbling on the brink of total obliteration.

Many ocean-dwelling populations are simply too fragile to stand a chance against human voraciousness, especially when we've got modern technology on our side, including sonar devices to find fish, nets the size of your hometown to collect them, and giant vacuums to slurp up the bottom-dwellers. The seven seas are no longer big enough to offer their inhabitants a place to hide.

Six billion people on Earth, and we're all hungry for the same few fish. Aquaculture ought to help [CONTINUED ON PAGE 243]

Sand in your hair, **salt on your skin:** There are no better accompaniments to sparkling-fresh seafood grilled over an open flame.

Garlic-yogurt mashed potatoes and almond-orange pesto accompany a juicy fillet of marinated, grilled MAHIMAHI. This tropical and subtropical fish grows and reproduces quickly, making it resilient to the effects of overfishing.

FOOD STYLING: RORI TROVATO, PROP STYLING: DANE HOLWEGER, ON BARTON, FASHION STYLING: KELLY HILL, GROOMING: CHARLA MILLER FOR ZENOBIA.







ATLANTIC MACKEREL is rich in omega-3s—and flavor. Here, a fillet is baked in a crisp coating of mustard and bread crumbs and served with a smear of garlic-parsley puree. Below: Seaver fell in love with the sea during childhood summers spent playing by the water's edge near Chesapeake Bay.



How was it caught? Set the dialogue in motion, says Seaver, and it can grow—and change the world.

Always ask before you buy: **Where'd that fish come from?**



SABLEFISH, a succulent white-fleshed fish from the icy-cold waters of the North Pacific, is wrapped in prosciutto and herbs, then baked until crisp outside. A salad of tender herbs and berries sets off its smoky-salty flavor. For recipes see *Love That!* on page 230.

## Reel In or Throw Back?

*A few well-informed consumers can make a huge difference by putting pressure on providers to alter harmful practices. Here are seven smart choices you can make right now:*

**1 CARRY A FISH LIST.** These wallet-size cards rank more than three dozen types of seafood in order from best choices to worst in terms of both health and sustainability. They are published by the Environmental Defense Fund ([edf.org](http://edf.org)), the Monterey Bay Aquarium ([mbayaq.org](http://mbayaq.org)), and the Blue Ocean Institute ([blueocean.org](http://blueocean.org)); you can download a list from their Web sites. The Natural Resources Defense Council, meanwhile, publishes a comprehensive guide to sushi ([nrdc.org](http://nrdc.org)). And if you're a parent, check out [kidsafeseafood.org](http://kidsafeseafood.org) for the best options for growing bodies.

**2 EAT LOW ON THE FOOD CHAIN.** Smaller fish—sardines, anchovies, farmed trout, fresh tilapia, arctic char—and bivalves such as scallops, clams, and oysters don't build up as many contaminants as do the large carnivores. Small fish also reproduce quickly, so their populations can recover from overfishing much more easily than the long-lived giants. "This is the best general rule of thumb," agrees Carl Safina, PhD, author and founding president of the Blue Ocean Institute, an

advocacy group, "because the larger the fish grow to be, the more likely they are to be both depleted and carrying a higher load of chemicals." Limit your consumption of predator fish to no more than once every two weeks.

**3 DIVERSIFY YOUR SEAFOOD DIET.** The broader the variety of crustaceans, bivalves, and fish you eat, the more you'll reduce your exposure to any one contaminant and ease the pressure on a particular species.

**4 LOOK FOR THE MARINE STEWARDSHIP** Council stamp of approval. This independent certification organization sends its detectives around the world to examine wild-capture fisheries. They give their label only to the leading lights in the field. A list of retailers carrying MSC-certified seafood can be found at [eng.msc.org](http://eng.msc.org).

**5 BUY ALASKAN.** "As a gross generalization, Alaska has the best-managed fisheries of any region in the world," says Safina. "They took a banking approach to fishing: Live only

off the interest and preserve the capital." Today their wild seafood populations are healthy in every sense of the word. Look for Alaskan salmon, halibut, and sablefish, and consider replacing half the canned tuna in your diet with canned Alaskan salmon.

**6 TRY SOMETHING NEW.** The next time you visit a restaurant, order an unfamiliar fish. "You aren't going to go into a grocery store and buy something you've never tasted before," says Barton Seaver. "At a restaurant, entertainment is part of what you're paying for. There are hundreds of species of edible seafood, but most restaurants offer only ten or 12, tops. By making something unfamiliar taste good, chefs can sell a solution."

**7 AVOID FARMED ATLANTIC SALMON** for now, but don't write off aquaculture outright. Farmed freshwater fish such as catfish, barramundi, and trout and bivalves such as oysters and clams are among the best choices available. And Kona Kampachi, a type of yellowtail, is being raised sustainably on innovative open-sea farms off the coast of Hawaii. With virtually no contaminants, it's a smart alternative to wild tuna. —C.B.





Fragrant onion relish, spiked with lime, is the perfect foil for barramundi's buttery flesh.

## THE RECIPES

### Nice Catch!

For an ocean-friendly dinner, cast a wider net—barramundi with sweet corn risotto, calamari fresh off the grill, paprika-and-sausage-spiked mussels, prosciutto-draped sablefish... (for story, see page 218).

#### Prosciutto-and-Herb-Wrapped Sablefish with Blackberry Salad

##### Fish:

- 4 pieces skinless Alaskan sablefish or halibut (about 5 ounces each)
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 sprig thyme leaves (about 3/4 tsp.)
- 1/3 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 4 large, thin slices prosciutto (about 3 ounces)
- 1 Tbsp. canola oil

##### Salad:

- 3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice (about 1 lemon)
- 1 shallot, finely chopped (about 1/4 cup)

- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley leaves
- 1 bunch chervil leaves (optional)
- 1 pint blackberries, fresh figs (quartered), or cherries (pitted)

1. To make fish: Place top oven rack 8 inches from broiler; preheat broiler. Season fish with salt and sprinkle with thyme. Spread 1/3 cup parsley on top of fillets in a single layer. Drape 1 slice prosciutto lengthwise over each fillet; tuck ends under fish.

2. Heat canola oil in large skillet over low heat for 2 minutes; remove from heat. Carefully place fish in pan, prosciutto side up, spacing evenly. Place in oven; broil 12 minutes, or until prosciutto crisps and fish flakes easily with a fork.  
3. To make salad: In a medium bowl, whisk lemon juice, shallot, and salt; let stand 5 minutes. Whisk in olive oil and season with pepper. Put remaining parsley, chervil (if using), and blackberries in a bowl and toss with 2 Tbsp. dressing. Season to taste; add more dressing, if desired.  
4. To serve, divide salad among 4 plates. Using a spatula, carefully remove fish from pan and place beside salad. Drizzle with any remaining dressing.  
*Makes 4 servings.*

#### Mahimahi with Garlic-Yogurt Potatoes and Almond-Orange Pesto

For this recipe, chef Barton Seaver blanches the garlic to remove most of its bitterness.

- 1 tsp. mild smoked paprika
- 3/4 tsp. ground coriander
- 2 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- About 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 fillets mahimahi, wahoo, or Alaskan halibut (about 5 ounces each)
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 1 medium head garlic, cloves separated and peeled (about 1/2 cup)
- 3 large russet potatoes (about 1 1/2 pounds), peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 cup 2 percent Greek yogurt, drained
- 1 1/2 tsp. grated orange zest

1. In a medium bowl, stir together paprika, coriander, 1/4 tsp. salt, and 1 Tbsp. olive oil. With paper towels, pat fish dry. Add to marinade; toss to coat. Cover bowl; refrigerate 15 minutes or up to 2 hours.  
2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°. Spread almonds on a sheet pan and toast in oven about 9 minutes, turning once, until fragrant and golden. Set aside to cool.  
3. Place garlic and 2 cups cold water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil over

high heat; strain, discarding water. Repeat. Return garlic to pan; add potatoes, 1 tsp. salt, and enough cold water to cover. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and cook about 12 minutes, or until potatoes can be easily pierced with a knife. Drain off cooking liquid, reserving 1/2 cup. Return potato mixture to saucepan; add yogurt and 1 tsp. salt. Using a potato masher, mash until creamy, adding 1/4 cup olive oil and reserved cooking water by tablespoonfuls. Whisk until fluffy and smooth (take care not to overwork). Adjust seasoning to taste.  
4. Preheat grill to high heat. Grill fish about 1 minute per side. Lower heat to medium and grill 3 to 5 minutes per side, or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Alternatively, preheat broiler; position top rack 5 inches from heat. Place fish on foil-lined pan; cook 7 to 10 minutes.  
5. Meanwhile, in a food processor, grind almonds to a coarse meal. Add orange zest, 2 Tbsp. olive oil, and 1/4 tsp. salt; pulse to combine. If necessary, add a bit more olive oil until a smooth, nearly pesto-like texture is achieved.  
6. To serve, spoon mashed potatoes onto the centers of 4 dinner plates. Top with grilled fish and a drizzle of almond pesto.  
*Makes 4 servings.*

#### Grilled Calamari with Minted Red Pesto

- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for peppers
- About 3 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 1/3 pounds calamari (about 10 small), cleaned, preferably with skin left on
- 3 large red bell peppers
- 2 tsp. sherry vinegar
- 10 fresh mint leaves, torn

1. Grate garlic over a large bowl. Stir in 1 Tbsp. olive oil and 2 to 3 tsp. salt. Add calamari; toss to coat. Refrigerate 10 minutes or up to 2 hours.  
2. Preheat grill to high heat. Lightly coat peppers with olive oil. Grill about 20

minutes, turning occasionally until evenly charred. Transfer to a bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Set aside about 10 minutes. Carefully remove plastic; let peppers cool slightly. Working quickly, gently scrape off skin. Core and seed peppers, reserving juices. Slice into 1-inch-wide strips. In a bowl, combine peppers, their juices, vinegar, 1 Tbsp. olive oil, and 1/4 tsp. salt. Set aside in a warm place.  
3. Grill calamari over high heat about 1 minute per side, until lightly charred (the tentacles will char faster than the rest—that's okay). Shake cooking juices out. Toss mint into pepper mixture, and place on serving dish. Top with calamari, season to taste, drizzle with 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil, and serve.  
*Makes 4 servings.*

#### Portuguese-Style Mussels

- 1 head garlic, cloves separated and peeled (about 1/2 cup)
- 1 small onion, peeled and quartered
- 1 1/2 tsp. mild smoked paprika
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground fennel seed
- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 pound linguica or chorizo sausage, sliced crosswise into 1/4-inch pieces
- 1 bunch kale (about 8 ounces), stemmed and coarsely chopped
- 2 pounds mussels, debearded and washed
- 3 cups fish stock, clam juice, or water
- 6 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. In a food processor, blend garlic, onion, paprika, coriander, and fennel. With motor running, drizzle in 1/2 cup olive oil; blend until a fine paste forms (you may need to add a bit more oil).  
2. Place a large stockpot over medium heat. Add sausage and cook, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes, or until fragrant. Stir in spice paste and cook 2 to 3 minutes more, or until color changes slightly and raw onion aroma has dissipated. Stir in kale until just wilted. Stir in mussels and stock.

3. Increase heat to high and bring mixture to a simmer. Stir once more and cover tightly. Cook 4 to 6 minutes, or until all mussels have opened (discard any mussels that haven't).  
4. To serve, divide mussels and kale among 4 large soup bowls, using a slotted spoon (leaving broth behind). Whisk butter into broth, add black pepper to taste, and ladle into each of the bowls of mussels, dividing evenly. Drizzle with about 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil each, and serve with toasted country bread.  
*Makes 4 servings.*

#### Barramundi with Sweet Corn Risotto and Onion-Basil Salsa

When shopping for barramundi, a type of sea bass native to northern Australia, ask for *Australis barramundi*, which is raised on a pioneering sustainable fish farm in Massachusetts (or try [thebetterfish.com](http://thebetterfish.com)).

##### Risotto:

- 6 ears fresh corn, kernels cut from cob, cobs reserved
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced (about 1 cup)
- 1 3/4 cups carnaroli rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine, such as sauvignon blanc
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 6 Tbsp. unsalted butter

##### Fish:

- 4 pieces barramundi or farmed striped bass (about 5 ounces each), skin on
- 1/8 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. canola oil

##### Salsa:

- 1 medium red onion, peeled and thinly sliced lengthwise
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- A few drops lime juice (about 1 wedge)
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 10 large basil leaves, gently torn

1. To make risotto: Put corn cobs and 6 cups water in a pot; bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook about