

Roasted Sea Bass on Black Thai Rice with Soy Beurre Blanc

This is by far our most popular menu item. In our first-ever review, a local restaurant critic called the sea bass "the entree that may soon become legendary." It has. When I first changed the menu back in 1999, I took the sea bass off because I felt as though my customers were not giving the other offerings a fair shake. Boy, was that a mistake! I got phone calls from people every day about the sea bass. I had people call me out to their tables to scold me for not having the sea bass. I had people walk out of the restaurant because we didn't have the sea bass. I had people tell me they would never come back to Tsunami until I brought the sea bass back. I had people beg, plead, threaten, and bribe me to bring the sea bass back. Finally, after a year of this nonsense (I'm a stubborn old coot), I gave in and brought the sea bass back. The good part of all this is that my "hardcore" regulars continued to frequent Tsunami and they actually tried the other entrees. Now my menu sales are a lot more balanced. I do still get phone calls from folks asking, "Y'all still got the sea bass, don't ya?" I do.

2 cups raw black Thai rice

4 cups cold water

~~1~~ 1/2 tbsp. kosher salt

1 stalk fresh lemongrass, smashed

1/4 cup sake or semidry white wine

1 tbsp. chopped ginger

1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

1/2 lb. unsalted butter, cut into tbsp.-sized chunks

1/4 cup good-quality soy sauce

4 fillets Chilean sea bass, 6-8 oz. each

Kosher salt

Olive oil

Place rice in a medium saucepan or stockpot with a thick bottom. Cover with some water and swish the rice around with your hand. Pour off the water and repeat the process several times until the water begins to run almost clear. Cover the rice with the 4 cups cold water and add the 2 tbsp. salt and lemongrass. Bring the rice to a boil on the stovetop, reduce to a simmer, and cook, covered, on very low heat for 35-40 minutes or until all the water has been absorbed. Remove the lemongrass stalk. Keep the rice covered until ready to serve.

To make the sauce, put the sake (or white wine) and ginger in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and let cook until almost, but not quite, evaporated. Add the cream, bring to a boil, and allow to simmer until the cream begins to thicken. With the cream still on the heat, begin adding the chunks of butter to the saucepan while whisking. Whisk continuously, allowing each piece of butter to fully incorporate before adding the next piece. Whisk in the soy sauce. Set the beurre blanc aside in a warm, not hot, place until ready to serve.

Pat the sea bass fillets dry with a paper towel. Season each portion on one side with a little kosher salt. Preheat a heavy, thick-bottomed sauté pan on the stove, add a drizzle of olive oil, and then gently place the sea bass, salted side down, in the pan. Do not shake the pan or attempt to move the fish; just let it sit and

cook for 5-6 minutes. Without turning the fish, place the entire pan in a preheated 400-degree oven.

While the fish finishes cooking in the oven (it will need another 5-6 minutes) begin your plate up. Use an ice-cream scoop with a thumb-action lever (trust me, this rice is so sticky you need help getting it off the scoop) to place a dollop of rice on the center of each plate. Ladle 2 or 3 oz. sauce around the rice.

Remove the sea bass from the oven and gently flip it over with a metal spatula. The top should be a nice golden brown. Test for doneness with a metal skewer. If there is any resistance, throw the fish back in the oven for a few more minutes. Place a portion of sea bass on top of each scoop of rice and serve immediately. **Serves 4.**