

A one-pan approach to getting dinner done fast

By SARA MOULTON
Associated Press

As kitchen wisdom goes, I often think the best tricks are the simplest. One-pan cooking, for example. The ability to cook an entire meal on a single rimmed sheet pan — an act that leaves you with nothing but that one pan to clean when dinner’s over — to me is nothing short of magic.

And the secret to making it work really is just a matter of organizing the order in which each ingredient lands on the baking sheet to ensure each gets neither too little nor too much time in the oven. And this recipe for baked steelhead trout with asparagus and potatoes will show you just how easy that is.

We start by seasoning all the parts individually at the beginning of the cooking process, not the end. If you wait until the end, the salt won’t do its job, which isn’t only to contribute saltiness, but to enhance the flavor of the ingredient to which it’s added. In practice, salt doesn’t so much amplify flavor as tamp down bitterness, thus allowing a food’s other flavors — notably its sweetness or sourness — to shine.

First in the oven is the asparagus so that it can be properly cooked and lightly browned all by itself and without crowding. Any time you want to brown a vegetable in the oven, you must make sure to spread it out across the pan in a single layer. Then the asparagus takes a break and the potatoes go in. Finally the fish comes into play. Lay it right on top of the now-browned potatoes and bake it until tender on the oven’s middle shelf.

How do you know when the fish is done? When a knife slides in with little resistance, the fish is good to go.

Butter and herbs are this recipe’s crowning touch. The hot fish melts the butter, creating a kind of instant sauce. Simple, right? Delicious, too. And just one pan to clean up. Now that’s my kind of meal.



Baked steelhead trout with asparagus, potatoes and herbs.

BAKED STEELHEAD TROUT WITH ASPARAGUS, POTATOES & HERBS

Start to finish: 50 minutes (30 minutes active)
Servings: 4

- 1 1/2 bunches asparagus (about 1 1/2 pounds), tough ends discarded and stems peeled if thicker than 1/3 inch
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 1 1/4 pounds Yukon Gold or large boiling potatoes, sliced crosswise 1/4 inch thick (leave the skins on)
- 1 1/2 pounds skinned steelhead trout, divided into 4 portions
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into thin slices
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh herbs, such as dill, chives, tarragon, basil or a mix

Heat the oven to 450 F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil.

On the prepared baking sheet, toss the asparagus with 2 teaspoons of the oil and a generous pinch each of salt and pepper. Spread the asparagus in an even layer. Bake on the oven’s top rack until starting to brown and are crisp-tender, about 7 minutes for thicker asparagus, 3 minutes for thin asparagus. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

On the baking sheet, toss the potatoes with another 2 teaspoons of the oil and a generous pinch each of salt and pepper. Spread the potatoes in an even layer. Bake on the oven’s top rack until barely golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and reduce the temperature to 400 F.

Arrange the fish pieces in one layer on top of the potatoes, sprinkle them with the lemon juice, drizzle with the remaining 2 teaspoons of oil, then season with salt and pepper. Set the pan on the oven’s middle shelf and bake for 5 minutes. Add the asparagus to the sheet pan and bake another 2 to 3 minutes, or until the fish is just cooked through.

Transfer the fish to 4 serving plates and top each portion with a few slices of butter. Transfer a quarter of the potatoes and asparagus to each of the plates, then sprinkle the herbs over each serving.

Nutrition information per serving: 470 calories; 220 calories from fat (47 percent of total calories); 24 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 100 mg cholesterol; 30 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 36 g protein; 430 mg sodium.



A wood stork flies back to its nest at the Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Delray Beach, Fla. The wetlands site is home to 60-80 pairs of nesting wood storks this year.

South Florida wetlands rich with birds

DELRAY BEACH, Fla. (AP) — The crowd quickly gathered — a dozen or so people, cameras in hand — as an 8-foot (2-meter) alligator came ashore.

“Alligator!” someone yelled as camera shutters clicked. “It’s got a turtle in its mouth!” said someone else. “Poor turtle,” said another.

But hungry alligators are just one of the sights at Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Delray Beach, Florida, 20 miles from Palm Beach. The wetlands are primarily known as one of the best bird-watching sites in South Florida.

“It’s a slice of the Everglades,” says Robert Nelton of Palm Beach County’s water utilities department. “You’ll see everything you would see in the Everglades but in suburban Delray Beach.”

More than 150 species, from migrating birds to native tropical birds, have been spotted at Wakodahatchee. Five years ago, there were no wood storks in the wetlands. Now, says Nelton, the population has boomed, with 60 to 80 nesting pairs of wood storks living there year-round “because the hunting is good,” he said.

Large green iguanas can be seen hanging in the trees, and the water is also home to turtles and frogs. The trees on one island area have herons, egrets,



An eight foot long alligator carries a Florida softshell turtle in his mouth at the Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Delray Beach, Fla.

anhinga and cormorants all nesting together.

Admission to the wetlands is free, and the place is so popular that cars from California to Canada wait in line for parking spots. Other visitors old and young come by bus from retirement villages and schools.

The name Wakodahatchee is derived from the Seminole Indian language and translates as “created waters.” Every day, the Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department’s Southern Region Water Reclamation Facility pumps approximately 2 million gallons of highly treated wastewater into the man-made, 50-acre wetlands.

Signs along the wetlands’ three-quarter-mile elevated boardwalk explain how the ecosystem works and identify plants, turtles and common birds. There are many spots where the path gets within a few feet of nests, offering a close look at nests and fledglings.

During bird season, November to May, 500 to 600 people visit daily. Some peer at the nests with binoculars, others use point-and-shoot cameras or cellphones, while others carry cameras with telephoto lenses attached to tripods. Topics of conversations range from the newest camera equipment to advice on best places to spot the birds — until someone yells “bird flying!”

Then all you can hear is the din of camera shutters snapping open and shut.



Two young purple gallinule swim in the recycled waters at the Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Delray Beach, Fla.



Gingery rhubarb compote with piloncillo and orange.

Use an unusual sugar to bring a fresh sweetness to spring

By AARTI SEQUEIRA
Associated Press

Given the size of my sweet tooth (think saber tooth tiger), I have myriad sweeteners in my cupboards. White, brown and coconut sugars, crunchy turbinado, honey, date syrup and molasses, they all line the shelves alongside a curious specimen that looks something like a gnome’s hat.

That hat is called piloncillo and it’s one of my favorites, not only for its deep caramel flavor, but also because as far as sugar goes, it’s as close as you can get to biting down on a stalk of sugarcane itself (a treat I’d occasionally enjoy as a child).

Unlike brown sugar, which usually is refined white sugar stirred together with molasses, piloncillo is the result of boiled down cane sugar juice, much like its Indian cousin, jaggery. Its flavor is complex, layered with fiery ginger, molasses, even rum. Its aroma is intoxicating, begging to be paired with warm spices like cinnamon, ground ginger and cloves.

Like many brown sugars, it can resemble stone in density and hardness, so I suggest microwaving it for about 20 seconds, then chopping it up with your heaviest cleaver.

This bold sugar is a perfect match for springtime’s most astringent offering, rhubarb. Every spring, I scour the farmers markets for those crimson stalks whose daring hues beat back winter’s gray. I make a big jar of rhubarb compote, assertively laced with fresh ginger, the warm Indian spice mix called garam masala, orange zest and the tiniest dusting of red chili flake. It tops everything from pork chops to my morning yogurt. Little did I know that this brave little compote has been missing a vital component until now: a sugar as pure as spring sunshine with enough fire to subdue rhubarb’s sour side.

Food Network star Aarti Sequeira is the author of “Aarti Paarti: An American Kitchen with an Indian Soul.” She blogs at <http://www.AartiPaarti.com>.

GINGERY RHUBARB COMPOTE WITH PILONCILLO AND ORANGE

Start to finish: 20 minutes
Servings: 8

Piloncillo is usually available wherever your super-market stocks sweeteners or Latin American ingredients.

- 2 pounds rhubarb, diced
- 1 1/2 cups chopped piloncillo
- Zest and juice of 1 navel orange
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon garam masala (or pumpkin pie spice)
- Pinch of red chili flakes
- Hefty pinch kosher salt

In a medium skillet over medium-low, combine all ingredients. Simmer for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the rhubarb breaks down. Taste for seasoning and adjust according to your palate. Cool slightly before serving. Refrigerate leftovers.

Nutrition information per serving: 120 calories; 0 calories from fat (0 percent of total calories); 0 g fat (0 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 31 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 26 g sugar; 1 g protein; 35 mg sodium.