

For several years, my partner and I used to open up a marina during the winter for special dinners, brunches and lunches. They became so popular that we would be sold out within a day or two of advertising the event. We didn't have a liquor license, but folks would bring their own if they wanted a glass of wine with dinner.

One night soon after everyone was tucking into their dinners, there was a knock on the door. Two RCMP were standing there in the cold. Invited in and asked if they wanted to join us, they declined, simply saying they wanted to moor overnight, but had their own dinner ready to go. I am absolutely sure they were oblivious to all the hurried clinking as bottles went back into bags under tables.

These meals were so much fun, and somehow squeezing in seating for 36 in a small store made it more intimate. The night would finish with folks chatting over coffee, with us wondering to ourselves how late they'd stay, so we could get on with clean up. One early spring dinner, we toyed with the idea of serving salmon, but had no grill and limited cooking facilities, so I came up with this recipe. It's easier than it looks, and presents beautifully.

Salmon Florentine

Serves 6

Ingredients

2# salmon fillet

½ T olive oil

10 oz fresh spinach or 1 box (10 oz) of frozen chopped spinach, thawed

1 batch of Cream Sauce with Shallots & Capers – follows (you won't use it all)

Phyllo pastry (will use about ½ a box)

¾ c butter, melted

Directions

Portion the salmon into 6 equal sized pieces – approximately 5 oz each

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet, over medium heat. Add in the spinach, stirring occasionally until it is all wilted, and portion into 6. Alternatively squeeze the moisture out of the thawed chopped spinach – I use a ricer with great results – portion into 6.

Make 1 batch of Cream Sauce with Shallots & Capers – recipe follows.

Unroll the phyllo sheets and cover with a piece of wax paper.

Lay one phyllo sheet on the work surface. Spread lightly with butter.

Lay another sheet on top of the buttered one. Spread lightly with butter.

Cut across the center of the sheet (not lengthwise).

Lay one of the halves on top of the other. There is now a 4-sheet stack of phyllo (closer to square rather than long and skinny).

Place one of the salmon portions across the width of the phyllo, about the same width of the salmon piece in from one end, so the phyllo can come up and over the salmon for rolling.

Lay the portion of spinach on the salmon – spread to cover.

Spoon 2 heaping tablespoons of Cream Sauce over the salmon.

Lift the end of the phyllo up to partially cover the salmon etc.

Fold both sides inwards – they will come up slightly over the salmon as well. As you fold, slightly taper the fold towards the other end of the phyllo.

Carefully roll the salmon holding the phyllo over it, to the other end. If any phyllo sticks out, neatly tuck it in.

Move the phyllo wrapped salmon to a parchment lined baking sheet. Spread with more melted butter, and snip the top of the phyllo packet 3 times with a pair of kitchen shears.

When all six packets are made, they can be covered well with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 24 hours, or baked immediately.

Remove the plastic wrap if you made them ahead of time, and bake in the center of the oven for approximately 25 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fillets. An instant read thermometer can be inserted in one of the snips to the center of the salmon to check the temperature if you're not sure. It should read 140 - 145° F (60 - 63° C)

Let the phyllo packets sit for 10 minutes before serving.

Cream Sauce with Shallots & Capers

Ingredients

3 whole shallots

1 T lemon juice

2 T butter

1 T flour

1 ½ c cream (33 - 36%)

2 T capers

salt & pepper to taste

Directions

Finely chop the shallots.

In a skillet, gently melt the butter over moderate heat.

Add in the shallots, and cook for 3 - 4 minutes until pale pink. Do not let them brown.

Stir in the lemon juice.

Add in the flour, and stir until thickened.

Stir in the capers.

Add in the cream and heat until gently simmering and thickened.

Season to taste with salt & pepper.