

Snapper à la Tidwell

There is a story associated with this dish, and - since it is a good story - bears telling. Shirley and I were anchored in a sheltered anchorage south of the town of Loreto in the Baja. We were with a group of boaters in a restaurant one night when we met one crazy Gringo named Charlie Tidwell, who was down for Dorado fishing. Charlie is a hale fellow well met type. A raconteur, sleight of hand artist, salesman of no small ability, and the greatest fisherman on the Texas Gulf Coast, by his own admission. Charlie's prowess as a fisherman is so extraordinary that all he has to do is drive his boat through any salt water between Brownsville and Sabine Pass, and fish will leap into it voluntarily rather than suffer the agony of pulling against his hook - which is so well baited and presented that they have no option except to get caught on it. I know this is true because he showed me the hook he uses, and there were no scars or scrapes on it of the type generally associated with strikes from any type of fish.

Charlie and Kay, his lady friend, mentioned that they had never, ever been on a sailboat, so we invited them for a sail with us the next day. As we were leaving the shelter of the anchorage, under power, we were approached by a rapidly moving powerboat. The boat pulled alongside, and the fishermen on board asked if we could take some freshly caught Dorado along their hands. They had to catch a plane in just a few hours, and had no way of taking the Dorado back with them. They had three Dorado in the boat, but we could only use one. We recommended they take the other two into the anchorage and assured them they wouldn't have any problem finding takers for them. Charlie took over from there, and showed us a way of cooking fish that we use almost exclusively to this day.

Preparation:

To prepare Snapper ala Tidwell, line an appropriately sized pan (for the number of fish to be cooked) with aluminum foil. Use enough foil to be able to cover the fish for baking.

In the bottom of the pan lay out pats of butter.

Squeeze fresh lemon juice over the butter. Liberally sprinkle lemon pepper on the juice and butter.

Scatter chopped garlic cloves in the bottom of the pan.

Lay in one layer of filleted snapper. Squeeze fresh lemon juice over the snapper, and lightly sprinkle with lemon pepper and garlic powder.

Cover with the aluminum foil, and bake for fifteen minutes at 325 degrees.

Remove from the oven, open the foil covering and spread the snapper with mayonnaise. Cover again, and bake for an additional five minutes. Remove from oven.

Turn on broiler.

Open aluminum foil covering, and liberally sprinkle freshly ground Parmesan cheese over the snapper.

Leave open, and return to broiler.

Remove when the Parmesan is lightly browned.

Put on plates and enjoy.