

Mariner's Menu

SEAFOOD INFORMATION FROM UNC SEA GRANT

Tilapia — A New Catch

Tilapia has been farm raised and enjoyed in other parts of the world for centuries. Its origins can be traced back to the Nile River. Early records show that tilapia was eaten by Egyptian Pharaohs some 4,500 years ago.

Tilapia is reputed to be the fish that Jesus fed to the multitudes in the Biblical story. It is also supposedly the fish St. Peter caught when tested by Jesus. It is often called "St. Peter's fish." Although you may see it advertised this way, the name is not sanctioned by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as a legal name.

Once seen mostly in white tablecloth restaurants, it is now widely available in the seafood section of supermarkets nationwide. The national consumer magazine *Simply Seafood* reported that tilapia was the new fish most frequently tried by its readers.

Because tilapia is new to seafood counters, consumers are asking questions about this fishy upstart. Where is it harvested? What does it taste like? How do I cook it?

Much of the tilapia sold in this country today is raised in ponds or tanks in Latin America, Asia and the United States. In 1994, the U.S. supply of this fish grew to almost 70 million pounds — surpassing trout.

Tilapia, a tropical fish, can thrive in either fresh or brackish water, but water temperatures must be higher than 55 F for it to survive.

The meat is white and firm, and the tender flakes have a sweet, mild flavor. You can use tilapia in recipes calling for snapper, flounder, catfish or any other white-fleshed fish.

Like farm-raised catfish, tilapia's mild flavor is enhanced by herbs and other seasonings. We tried it in some of our earlier recipes such as flounder with fine herbs and found it delightful. It also accepts sauces well.

Tilapia is versatile. You can broil, sauté, grill, bake, steam, fry, microwave or poach it.

Low in fat, a 3 1/2-ounce serving of tilapia contains fewer than 100 calories and more than 18 grams of protein. It is low in sodium. Remember though, these numbers are affected by cooking methods.

On our scale of 1 to 5 (5=excellent, 1=poor), these recipes all received average evaluations of 4.5 or higher.



Tilapia Amandine

1 pound tilapia fillets
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
salt
freshly ground black pepper
flour
1/4 cup margarine
1/4 cup slivered blanched almonds
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley
1/16 teaspoon Tabasco sauce

Brush fillets with lemon juice. Lightly salt and pepper. Dredge in flour.

Melt margarine in medium skillet over medium heat. Place fillets in skillet and sauté until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Turn and repeat on other side. Remove and drain on paper towels. Sauté almonds in remaining margarine until lightly browned. Stir in parsley and Tabasco. Spoon over fish. Serves 4 to 6.

Broiled Tilapia with Dill Butter

8 tilapia fillets
4 tablespoons margarine, melted
salt
freshly ground black pepper

Brush fillets with melted margarine. Salt and pepper lightly. Broil about 4 inches from heat until done, about 8 to 10 minutes. Spread with Dill Butter. Serves 8.

Dill Butter

1/2 stick margarine, softened
2 tablespoons fresh dill or 2 teaspoons dried
1/2 teaspoon pressed garlic

Combine margarine, dill and garlic in small bowl. Spread over cooked fillets.

Pan-Fried Tilapia

1 pound tilapia fillets
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 tablespoons margarine
salt
freshly ground white pepper
flour

Heat oil in medium skillet over medium heat. Add margarine.

Lightly salt and pepper fillets. Dredge in flour. Shake off excess. Coat in egg wash. Place in skillet and cook over medium heat

until golden brown on one side, about 4 minutes. Turn and repeat on other side. Remove and drain on paper towels. Serves 4 to 6.

Egg wash

2 eggs
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Whisk eggs. Stir in Parmesan.

Batter-Fried Tilapia

1 pound tilapia fillets
oil for deep-frying

Cut fillets into pieces about 1 1/2 inches by 3 inches.

Dip fish, one piece at a time, into batter to coat. Slide into 375-degree oil. Cook until golden brown on the outside and translucent inside, about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from oil and drain on paper towels. Serves 4 to 6.

British Beer Batter

1 cup flour
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup beer

Combine flour, paprika, salt and pepper in medium bowl. Gradually stir in beer. Beat until smooth.

Broiled Tilapia with Hollandaise Sauce

1 pound tilapia fillets
4 tablespoons margarine, melted
salt
freshly ground black pepper
paprika

Brush fillets with melted margarine. Lightly salt and pepper. Sprinkle with paprika. Broil about 4 inches from heat until done, about 8 to 10 minutes. Serve with Hollandaise Sauce.

Cooked Hollandaise Sauce

3 egg yolks
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup firm cold butter, cut into eighths
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon paprika
1/16 teaspoon cayenne pepper

In small saucepan, beat together egg yolks, water and lemon juice. Cook over very low heat, stirring constantly, until yolk mixture bubbles at edges. Stir in butter, one piece at a time, until melted and sauce is thickened. Stir in salt, paprika and cayenne. Remove from heat. Cover and chill if not using immediately. Makes about 3/4 cup.

Note: Hollandaise sauce should not be prepared with raw eggs. This recipe is from the American Egg Board.

Poached Tilapia with Lemon Tarragon Butter

1 pound tilapia fillets
4 cups water
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/4 cup sliced carrots
1/2 cup thinly sliced onion
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
1 teaspoon salt
1 bay leaf
2 sprigs fresh parsley
1 cup dry white wine

Mix poaching ingredients together. Simmer for 20 minutes. Place fillets in liquid and poach until fish flakes easily with a fork, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove immediately. Spread with Lemon Tarragon Butter. Serves 4 to 6.

Lemon Tarragon Butter

1/2 stick margarine, softened
1/2 teaspoon dried tarragon
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

In small bowl, combine margarine, tarragon and lemon juice. Spread over warm fish.

Sautéed Tilapia Fillets with Lime

1 pound tilapia fillets
salt
freshly ground black pepper
flour
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon margarine
1/2 teaspoon pressed garlic
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
1/3 cup thinly sliced green onion

Lightly salt and pepper fillets. Dredge in flour.

Heat oil in medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add

margarine. Sauté fillets until golden on one side, about 3 to 4 minutes. Turn and repeat on other side.

While fish is cooking, combine garlic, wine and lime juice.

Remove fillets to warm platter. Add wine mixture to pan, scraping bottom of pan. Cook until slightly reduced, about 2 minutes. Stir in onions and heat. Spoon over fish. Serves 4 to 6.

Pan-Fried Tilapia with Browned Butter Sauce

1 pound tilapia fillets
salt
freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
6 tablespoons margarine
flour
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley

Sprinkle fish lightly with salt and pepper. Heat oil in medium skillet over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons margarine and heat. Place fillets in pan and cook until golden brown on one side, about 3 to 4 minutes. Turn and repeat on other side. Remove to warm platter.

Wipe pan with paper towel. Heat remaining margarine over medium-high heat until it foams and begins to brown. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice and parsley. Spoon over fillets. Serves 4 to 6.

Tilapia with Fine Herbs

1 pound tilapia fillets
1/4 cup margarine
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons fresh snipped chives (or 1 tablespoon dried)
3 tablespoons fresh snipped dill (or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried)
1/16 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon salt
paprika

In small saucepan, melt margarine over medium heat. Stir in lemon juice, parsley, chives, dill, cayenne and salt.

Place fillets in lightly greased baking dish. Pour margarine mixture over top. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake, uncovered, at 400 F until fish flakes easily with a fork, about 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to warm platter.

Boil pan juices over high heat until reduced to about 1/4 cup. Pour over fish. Serves 4 to 6.

Tilapia Parmesan

6 tilapia fillets
6 tablespoons margarine, melted
salt
freshly ground black pepper
3/4 cup freshly ground Parmesan cheese
paprika

Brush fillets on both sides with margarine. Lightly salt and pepper. Dredge in Parmesan.

Place on baking pan. Sprinkle tops with paprika. Bake at 450 F until done, about 8 to 10 minutes. Serves 6.



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Tasters and Testers

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