

“Cod dish gives weeknights a tropical twist”

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Published in the Eagle Herald on Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Balancing healthy eating with a crazy weeknight schedule is tricky for everyone. We all have competing priorities that chip away at our days: kids, careers, school, home, family obligations all take time and energy. And next thing we know, it's 6 p.m. and we haven't given any thought to dinner. What we do next is key.

If we swing by the drive-thru or order a pizza on our handy phone app every time we have a busy weeknight, our health will suffer. A better strategy: Save the pizza for true cravings, and lean on a few recipes in our hip-pocket that can get us through the mealtime crunch. And then stock up on the pantry ingredients that make those recipes a breeze to pull together on a busy night.

One of those pantry items is frozen fish fillets. Yes, I love fresh fish tossed right on the grill with a tiny bit of lemon, olive oil, salt and pepper. But I don't always have time to head to the fish counter. So, frozen fish is my plan B. I stock up on some classics like Alaskan cod and wild salmon that you can usually cook straight from frozen - just add a few minutes to your cooking time.

Poaching is a perfect cooking method those frozen fillets because it takes merely minutes, and leaves your fish an open canvas to showcase whatever other ingredients you might have on hand. Flavor the water with some acid and herbs (like lemon juice and fresh thyme branches), or even just a bit of white wine and some dried herbs will work in a Tuesday-night pinch.

Keep the water at a bare simmer - it should active like club soda, not like a rolling boil. And then make a quick relish to top your fish and give it some freshness and excitement.

Today's recipe stars papaya because it's widely available this time of year, peeled and cubed, if you want to pay an extra dollar or two. Papaya is full of vitamins and fiber, and raw papaya has enzymes that are celebrated for helping in digestion. But feel free to swap out for another fruit (even canned peaches work) if you prefer - the tangy lime and apple cider vinegar will marry most fruit beautifully with the fish, no advanced planning required.

Poached cod with raw papaya relish

4 fillets of cod (about 4-5 ounces each)
1/4 cup white wine
3 cups water
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1/4 teaspoon salt

Relish:

1 1/4 cups papaya, cut into small cubes
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons lime juice

1/2 cup chopped tomatoes
2 green onions, chopped
2 tablespoons flat-leafed parsley or cilantro, chopped
2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper

1. Bring wine, thyme, water and salt to a bare simmer (it should look like bubbly club soda). Place the cod in the water and keep at a bare simmer and allow to cook until fish is cooked through about 4 minutes for an average piece of fish. Remove the fish, and keep on a warm plate.
2. While the fish is cooking, stir together the relish ingredients in a small bowl. Spoon the relish on top of each piece of cooked fish, allowing the heat of the fish to bring out the relish flavors.