



CHUBBY HUBBY

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STEAMED FISH HONG KONG STYLE





Steaming fish Hong Kong style is incredibly easy. It's also healthy, quick and delicious. In general Singaporean Chinese/Cantonese restaurant parlance, Hong Kong style fish is steamed with aromatics (usually ginger, spring onion, coriander) then finished with hot oil and a light soy sauce dressing (commonly a combination of soy sauce, sugar and a little water).

When you're able to get a fish as fresh as this French farmed sea bream and steam it precisely, even a dish so minimalist can be exquisitely indulgent. As I brought this Hong Kong style steamed fish to the dining table the other day, my daughter T2 demanded for the tender cheeks. I went directly for the collagen laden eyes.

Then, we lingered over the flesh that runs down its back. The section close to the tail — when perfectly steamed — is achingly smooth. It's what I set aside for my babies when they first move onto solid food. This usually sates T2's small appetite. However, my guilty pleasure is the near gelatinous interstitial flesh that runs through its fins—the bits that diners who don't know any better discard.



Ingredients for Cantonese steamed fish. Spring onions, ginger, coriander and seasonings.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AROMATICS

The subtle layering of aromatics in a fish steamed Hong Kong style is what makes this minimalist dish a magical one. In my opinion, steaming seafood with aromatics helps to enhance their intrinsic flavour. For this dish, I like using spring onions, ginger and coriander.



green-white mid section of the same spring onions are julienned and reserved for garnishing. (I usually save the delicate green tops for another purpose such as adding vegetal sweetness and colour to a beef stir-fry.)

Ginger is included to mitigate any unappealing fishiness in steamed fish. I am a fan of the elegantly powerful **Bentong ginger** for this use. Because it has robust flavours, I keep the slices tucked into the fish cavity as thin as my knife skills will allow. Julienne an additional section of ginger root (approximately 1 cm thick) for garnishing.





Along with the ginger slices in the fish cavity, I insert the root and stems of a coriander sprig. The root has a beguiling, savoury quality. I scrape its exterior off with a small knife blade to help release its deliciousness. Finally, I gently pluck the leaves off the top of the coriander sprig and save these for the garnish, too.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

The hardier sections of the aromatics are kept whole or rough cut as they will be steamed with the fish. This gives subtlety to their power. The leaves and tops are finely cut as they're served almost raw over the cooked fish (1 layer on ginger first, then spring onions, then coriander leaves).

Finally, a drizzle of hot oil releases their aroma and draws them together. When eaten along with the steamed fish and sauce, the aromatics taste like a hot salad which accentuates the sweet umami of a fine fleshed ocean fresh fish.



Ingredients for steaming fish in Hong Kong style.

RECIPE

Steamed fish Hong Kong style

(Serves 4 as part of a multi-course meal)

Ingredients

1 whole fish 600-800g, or 1-2 fish steaks



2 slices ginger
1 cm thick piece of ginger
1 large sprig of coriander, root intact if possible
2 tbs light soy sauce
1/2 tsp castor sugar
2 tbs water
2-3 tbs cooking oil

PREPARE UP TO A DAY AHEAD

Gut and scale fish. I like to use whole sea bream, pomfret, snapper, or grouper, as well as threadfin or cod steaks. Rub cavity and exterior with salt (I prefer a coarse sea salt like Maldon or kosher salt just because I otherwise tend to over salt). Rinse, pat dry, cover and refrigerate.

Trim off spring onion roots then cut a 9cm length of the white bases. Set these aside for steaming with the fish. Cut another 9cm of the green-white section of the spring onions and julienne. Save remainder for another use. Julienne 1 cm thick piece of ginger.

Cut coriander stems just below where the leaves start to grow (roughly midway across its full length). Gently scrape the thin skin off the tiny root with a sharp knife. Set this lower section of the coriander sprig aside with the two slices of ginger.

Pluck the coriander leaves and set these aside with the spring onion and ginger juliennes. Refrigerate if you're prepping in advance.

Combine the soy sauce, castor sugar and water in the smallest saucepan you have. Heat gently and stir until the sugar dissolves. Set aside.

Place the oil (we use sunflower or peanut) in a small saucepan.

Now, you're prepped and ready to go once it's time for you to serve your fish steamed Hong Kong style.



Remove fish from the refrigerator 30 minutes prior to steaming. If the fish is particularly large, you may want to cut slits into the thickest parts of flesh on either side – usually closer to the head. This aids cooking. Tuck coriander root and ginger slices into the fish cavity.

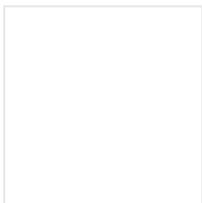
Place the four white spring onion lengths on a heatproof plate that fits in your steamer. Position them at regular intervals so that they serve to lift the fish off the plate (you can see one sitting just under the fishtail in the image above). Lay the fish over the spring onions. This is to help ensure that the fish is cooked evenly.

When ready to serve, steam the fish. I use the steam function on my **Miele steam combi oven**. It takes about 12 minutes to steam a whole fish ranging from 500-800g at 100 degrees Celsius.

Remove from the steamer. Drain off any liquid that may have collected in the dish or transfer the fish onto a serving dish. Then garnish with ginger, spring onions and coriander leaves.

Heat the oil until it begins to smoke. Remove from heat immediately and drizzle it over the ginger, spring onion and coriander garnish. Be careful. The oil will sizzle and may splatter. Video on **IG Stories** Highlights.

Next, drizzle the sauce around, rather than onto, the fish to avoid making the garnish soggy. Serve immediately. Serve some sauce with each portion of fish. It also tastes fabulous drizzled onto steamed rice.



About **Su-Lyn Tan**

Su-Lyn is Aun's better half and for many years, the secret Editor behind this blog known to readers simply as S. Su-Lyn is an obsessive cook and critical eater whose two favourite pastimes are spending time with her three kids and spending



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