

Mackerel Escabeche – Serves 2-4

Escabeche refers to a method of marinating fried or poached fish in an acidic mixture before serving, and to the marinade itself. It is popular in Spain, Portugal and Provence. Usually served as a tapas dish or starter. Would also make a light lunch, or be good for BBQs or picnics/buffets. The origin of the word Escabeche is Persian, brought to Spain by the Arabs during the Moorish conquests. The acidic marinade is usually vinegar of some kind (you could try different types for

different flavour results), but can also contain citrus juice. In my version, the fish is fried on only the skin side so that the flesh stays soft, the acidic marinade 'cooks' the flesh by reacting with the proteins. (The acid will also inhibit the growth of bacteria.) You should be able to see the flesh turn pale after marinating, much like it does when it is cooked with heat. This works best with any small, oily fish; mackerel, sardine, herring, red mullet etc.

Ingredients

2 whole mackerel (or 4 fillets)
White wine vinegar (red wine, balsamic, *cider* or sherry vinegar also ok)
Extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper
A little oil
A little plain flour
1-2 shallots
1 small carrot
1 lemon and/or orange
1 clove of garlic
1 sprig thyme
Star anise, cardamom, cloves, saffron, nutmeg, coriander seeds (any combination)

Fillet the mackerel, and pin-bone.

Dust the skin side lightly with flour, and season both sides.

Pan-fry in a little oil on the skin side until golden.

Place in a shallow dish, in one layer.

Finely slice the shallot, garlic and carrot.

Warm a generous amount of olive oil in a saucepan on a low heat.

Poach the shallot, garlic and carrot until softened.

Add the spices, thyme and lemon/orange zest, and infuse.

Add the vinegar (about half the amount of oil) and season to taste.

Pour the marinade over the fish to cover.

Cover and keep in the fridge overnight.

To serve, take out of the fridge 20 mins or so before to let it come to room temperature.

Alternatively, you could warm through in the oven. It shouldn't be served hot though.

I like to serve this with a leafy salad and/or potato salad and crusty bread.

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