Moqueca – Fish Stew with Coconut

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

Brazilians have been making Moquecas for 300 years. Here are two classic recipes plus tips and techniques for serving this fantastic meal - pronounced mo-ke-ka. - 2kg(lbs) of fish (grouper, monkfish, kingfish, salmon, or mahi mahi) - Juice of 3 lemons - Salt - Pimenta Malegueta (hot red chilis) finely chopped - Qty flat leaf parsley and spring onions finely chopped - 1 pound fresh shrimp, shelled and deveined - Qty Coriander/Cilantro - 4 or 5 tomatoes - 2 red onions finely chopped - Qty garlic paste - Qty extra virgin olive oil - The milk of one fresh coconut is traditional, about 600mls - Dende oil (optional)

Instructions

1. Finely chop the cilantro, parsley,spring onions, tomatoes and chillis. Set aside. 2. Chop garlic, add salt, and continue chopping, until a paste forms (use a mortar and pestle if that's easier). Add to herbs. 3. Prepare fillets on a separate plastic chopping board to avoid cross-contamination. 4. Heat a large clay pot, over a low/medium flame 5. Add mixed herbs, chillis, garlic and tomatoes 6. As soon as you start to smell the perfume from the herbs filling the kitchen, add a splash of olive oil. 7. Clean fish, descale and rinse thoroughly. Pat dry with a paper towel. 8. Squeeze fresh lemon juice over the fish, season with salt, and carefully place over the herbs. 9. Add coconut milk, and dende oil. 10. Pop on the lid, and leave until cooked. 11. When the flesh starts to leave the bone you know its ready. About 15-20 minutes. 12. Serve direct to the table 13. Open the lid and allow the perfume to escape at the table. It's a must. Serve with plain white rice. The key utensils and ingredients to make a good Moqueca are: - A clay cooking pot - Fresh ingredients - Dende oil The clay retains the heat, and keeps the sauce hot, as you ladle it out over the fish. Fresh ingredients are integral to any fish dish, and especially so for Moqueca. Same day, fresh. And lastly, dende oil releases an odor, flavour and taste that makes the dish. Without it, it doesn't really work. Dende oil (also called Palm Oil) can be purchased at South American specialty shops or online.