

BASICS WITH A BITE

Tips For Updating Your Classic Seafood Favorites

BY LYNN CARLSON

Shrimp cocktail. Fried fish. Baked fish. Crabcakes. All venerable seafood classics we continue to love even the thousandth time we consume them. After all, they wouldn't have staying power if they didn't also have mass appeal.

But every now and then it's nice to serve an old favorite with a new twist—adding a bold or out-of-the-ordinary flavor, a little heat, or a lighter texture.

In that spirit, we offer these updates on four seafood favorites.

Creole mustard is the key to this New Orleans-style shrimp cocktail that, properly garnished, can double as a salad course. Creole mustard is the color and texture of a country-style Dijon, but is milder and differently spiced.

The most widely available brand is Zatarain's. At least one Shallotte supermarket carries it.

SHRIMP REMOULADE

2 Tbsp. Creole mustard
 ½ cup mayonnaise
 Tabasco to taste
 1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
 2 Tbsp. finely chopped celery
 2 Tbsp. finely chopped parsley
 1 clove garlic, minced
 1 pound large cold boiled shrimp

Leaf lettuce, red bell pepper, olives or other garnish

Whisk together mustard, mayo, Tabasco and vinegar. Stir in celery, parsley and garlic.

Line four small salad plates with leaf lettuce. Divide shrimp evenly and arrange on plates. Top with remoulade sauce and garnish with julienne red bell pepper and green or black olives.

Serves 4.

It doesn't matter if you're on a diet or not. It doesn't matter how you feel about talk show hosts. If you like food that's fresh, spicy and imaginatively prepared, you'll love *In The Kitchen With Rosie: Oprah's Favorite Recipes*.

Rosie Daley, Oprah Winfrey's personal chef, is one of the masters of spa food. And when folks pay thousands of dollars a week to visit a spa, they expect to eat well and lose weight at the same time. Rosie delivers.

Perhaps her most interesting creations are four "unfried favorites," recipes she devised as low-fat surrogates for classic dishes that Oprah and most Southerners love—fried chicken, fried fish, french fries and crabcakes.

Here are the recipes for "unfried catfish" and "unfried crabcakes."

Instead of catfish, I recommend flounder, grouper or whatever you've just caught or bought. If you can't find packaged blackening seasoning, just use Old Bay.

UNFRIED CATFISH

Light vegetable oil cooking spray

¼ cup cornmeal
 1 tsp. dried thyme
 1 tsp. dried basil
 ½ tsp. garlic powder
 ½ tsp. lemon pepper
 4 tsp. blackening seasoning
 Four 4-ounce catfish fillets
 ½ tsp. paprika

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Spray vegetable oil over baking sheet 3 times to coat.

Put the cornmeal, thyme and basil on a large plate and mix well.

Spring ½ tsp. of the garlic powder, ½ tsp. of the lemon pepper and 1 tsp. of the blackening seasoning on each of the fillets. Coat the fillets thoroughly with the cornmeal mixture and transfer them to the prepared baking sheet. Coat the catfish lightly with the cooking spray.

Place the baking sheet on the bottom shelf of the oven. Bake for 20 minutes. Reduce the heat to 350 degrees and bake for about 5 minutes more, until the crust is golden and the fish flakes easily.

Don't be intimidated by the jalapeno pepper in this recipe. Fresh jalapenos aren't that hot—especially the ones you get from the supermarket and especially if you remove the seeds and membrane before chopping. They're so flavor-

ful, you'll learn to love them and use them often.

Don't forget to wear rubber gloves anytime you chop hot chilies. If you don't, you'll surely sting your eyes next time you rub them—even after a couple of hand-washings.

UNFRIED CRABCAKES

1 pound fresh lump crabmeat
 Light vegetable oil cooking spray

1 tsp. freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1 Tbsp. snipped fresh chives
 1 large whole egg or 2 large egg whites, beaten

1 Tbsp. Old Bay seasoning
 1 tsp. Italian seasoning
 2 Tbsp. chopped jalapeno pepper (1 large pepper)

1 tsp. baking powder
 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
 1 cup unflavored dried bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Rinse crabmeat under cold running water and drain, making sure to remove any filament or shell.

Spray the vegetable oil over the baking sheet 3 times to coat.

In a large bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, except ½ cup of the bread crumbs, and stir in the crabmeat. Using ¼ cup for each crabcake, form the mixture into 8 cakes. Roll each in the reserved bread crumbs and place on the prepared baking sheet. Coat the crabcakes lightly with the cooking spray.

Place the baking sheet on the

bottom shelf of the oven and bake the crabcakes for about 5 minutes per side, until brown.

This is almost too simple to believe. This recipe is from *The New Basics*, a fine cookbook by the Silver Palate ladies, Julee Rosso and Sheila Lukins, who also publish food articles in *Parade* magazine regularly.

If you've never used sesame oil that may explain why the things you stir-fry at home never have the complex flavor of the dishes you eat at good Chinese restaurants.

Sesame oil is available at larger supermarkets, Asian markets and sometimes from health food stores. I mail order it from an outfit called Spice Merchant, a great source for Asian cooking ingredients and herbs/spices in bulk. Call me if you want their number.

Sesame oil isn't cheap, but it's used very sparingly and there is no substitute for the rich smoky flavor it imparts.

SOY-BAKED SNAPPER

2 small red snappers (about 1½ pounds each), cleaned and left whole

¼ cup soy sauce
 1 Tbsp. Asian sesame oil
 2 cloves garlic, minced

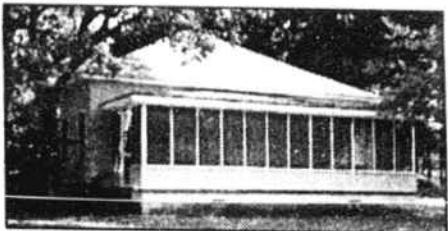
Cut three slits, about ½ inch deep and 2 inches apart, diagonally in the sides of each fish; don't cut down to the bone. Arrange the fish in one layer in an ovenproof casserole.

Combine the soy, sesame oil and garlic in a small bowl. Stir well and spoon over the fish, making sure the mixture seeps into the slits. Let the fish stand, loosely covered, at room temperature, for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Bake the fish until it is cooked through and the skin is lightly crisp about 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

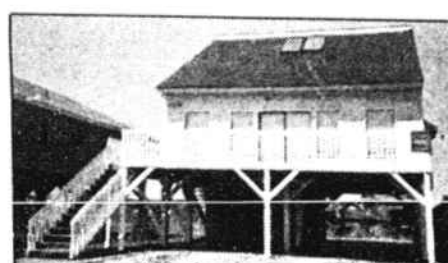
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