

FILETE EN MOJO DE AJO

WHITEFISH IN GARLIC AND HERB SAUCE

All along the coast of Yucatán, seafood restaurants big and small offer the same theme-and-variations on fish: breaded and fried, grilled, roasted in banana leaves – or smothered with *mojo de ajo*, a heady garlic sauce. As long as you like fish, you're set! The sauce for this dish is related to Italian *pesto* and Argentinian *chimichurri*: herbs like cilantro or parsley are ground together with olive oil and garlic. In this case, the primary ingredient is garlic – the recipe calls for three whole heads. But don't worry: once cooked, the garlic is much milder, almost sweet. For true garlic lovers, you can add extra raw cloves to the purée for even more punch.

10 SERVINGS

🍴 PREPARE THE MARINADE 🍴

• **10 grouper fillets** (*about 3 lbs./1.35 k. Substitute: any firm, white-fleshed fish*)

• **3 whole heads garlic**
• **3/4 cup (175ml) olive oil**
• **1/2 tsp. (2.5ml) salt**
• **1/2 tsp. (2.5ml) ground black pepper**

• **1/2 cup (120ml) freshly squeezed lime juice**

• **2 cups (470ml) tightly packed flat-leaf parsley, cilantro or basil or a combination totaling 2 cups,** *cleaned and stems removed*

• **1/2 cup (120ml) olive oil**
• **3 Tbs. (45ml) butter**

• **3 Tbs. (45ml) butter**
• **1 Tbs. (15ml) vegetable oil**
• **Salt**
• **Pepper**
• **Paprika**

Arroz Blanco, fresh lime wedges and a green salad are the usual accompaniments to Filete al Mojo de Ajo. Diners may opt to cut the fish into pieces, place them on tortillas and make tacos to taste with the greens, rice, a squeeze of lime juice and the table salsa of their choice.

STEP 1 CLEAN THE FILLETS, making sure to remove any bones; wash and dry thoroughly. Place in a large non-reactive baking dish or platter and set aside.

STEP 2 CHAR GARLIC over a flame. The paper will burn away and the cloves will cook slightly. (You may also oven-roast them although that process takes longer.) Allow to cool, then peel. In a blender, purée peeled garlic cloves with olive oil and seasonings to create a thick paste. (For those who prefer a more intense garlic taste, add one or two raw cloves to the mixture and purée).

STEP 3 USING A PASTRY BRUSH, brush fillets lightly with some of the garlic purée on both sides. Reserve the remaining purée. Pour the lime juice over the fillets; refrigerate at least 1 and up to 4 hours.

🍴 MAKE THE MOJO DE AJO 🍴

STEP 4 IN A BLENDER or food processor, purée the herbs with the olive oil. In a medium skillet, melt the butter; add herb purée and cook over low heat. Add the reserved garlic purée to the skillet, stir well to incorporate and continue cooking for 5 minutes. Check seasonings and set aside.

🍴 FINISH AND SERVE 🍴

STEP 5 IN A LARGE NON-STICK SKILLET, melt the butter and oil until hot but not smoking. Just before frying the fillets, give them a light sprinkle of the salt, pepper and paprika on both sides. Place fish in the skillet and cook quickly, turning once – about 3 minutes per side – until lightly browned and just cooked through. Test for doneness by pressing your index finger into the center of each fillet; it should be firm instead of springy.

STEP 6 SERVE. Arrange all fillets on a serving platter, or on individual plates. Top with on 3-4 spoonsful of the green *mojo de ajo* per fillet.