

PESCADO EN TIKIN-XIK

GRILLED ACHIOTE-MARINATED FISH

Along with *Pollo Pibil* and *Cochinita Pibil*, this dish has its roots deep in the Maya past. All share the *recado rojo* – an intensely flavored spice paste made of *achiote* seeds and the juice of the *naranja agria* – and all are typically cooked either in or on top of banana leaves. *Tikin* in Maya means “dry” and *xik* means “wing.” This simply refers to the way the fish is typically prepared, which is to butterfly a whole fish and spread it open. Unlike the *pibil* dishes, however, *tikin-xik* is not cooked in a pit, but rather over a wood or charcoal fire.

This particular version has been influenced by the Mediterranean cooking styles of Veracruz.

10 SERVINGS

🌀 PREPARE THE MARINADE 🌀

- **8 Tbs. (120ml) Recado Rojo** (*achiote paste, available in Latin markets*)
- **8 Tbs. (120ml) juice of naranja agria** (*Also known as sour orange or Seville orange. Substitute: 2 parts fresh lime juice, 1 part each fresh orange juice and grapefruit juice*)
- **2 Tbs. (30ml) Spanish olive oil**

- **4 large cloves garlic, peeled and roasted in a comal or heavy skillet**
- **2 tsps. (6g) peppercorns**
- **2 tsps. (14g) sea salt**
- **1 Tbs. (15ml) orégano Yucateco, toasted and crumbled**

- **6 lbs. (2.75k) red snapper** (*huachinango*), **grouper** (*mero*) or **porgy** (*pargo*), *cleaned and butterflied*

- **Large banana leaves**
- **2 Tbs. (30ml) Spanish olive oil**

- **3 chiles x'catiques**, (*Substitute: Anaheim, banana pepper*) *charred, stemmed, seeded, sliced lengthwise*)
- **1 green bell pepper, thinly sliced**
- **1/2 white onion, thinly sliced**
- **2 large Roma tomatoes, sliced**
- **15 stuffed green olives, sliced**
- **1 Tbs. (15ml) small capers**
- **5 bay leaves**
- **Several sprigs epazote**
- **1/4 cup (75ml) dry white wine**

STEP 1 DISSOLVE THE RECADO ROJO in the juice. Use more juice if necessary to achieve the consistency of thick cream. Add oil and stir to blend.

STEP 2 COARSELY CRUSH THE ROASTED GARLIC with peppercorns, sea salt and orégano in a *molcajete* or mortar and pestle. Add mixture to *recado rojo* and stir until blended. *NOTE: If using homemade recado you may omit this step.*

STEP 3 PLACE THE FISH skin-side down in a large dish; apply the marinade and coat the entire fish thoroughly, on both sides. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour but no more than 4 hours.

🌀 ASSEMBLE AND GRILL 🌀

STEP 4 REMOVE THICK CENTER RIBS from banana leaves and discard. On a removable roasting rack, place a layer of banana leaves. Brush leaves with olive oil. Put the marinated fish skin-side down, leaving enough overlap of banana leaves so that you will be able to wrap and completely cover the fish. Top fish with any remaining marinade.

STEP 5 DECORATE THE FISH with the vegetables; finish with the bay leaves and *epazote*. Dribble on the wine and wrap the leaves over the top of the fish to cover thoroughly but loosely.

STEP 6 GRILL OVER CHARCOAL, turning once, for approximately 20 minutes, or until firm. To serve, place entire package on a serving platter; cut open banana leaves to reveal fish, and garnish with wedges of sour orange if desired. Serve with *Cebollas Encurtidas* and *Chile Tamulado*.