



FISH WITHOUT GUILT
 CHEFS GRAPPLE WITH SUSTAINABILITY TODAY IN G

SPORTS

Celtics snap losing streak

Senators hold off Bruins

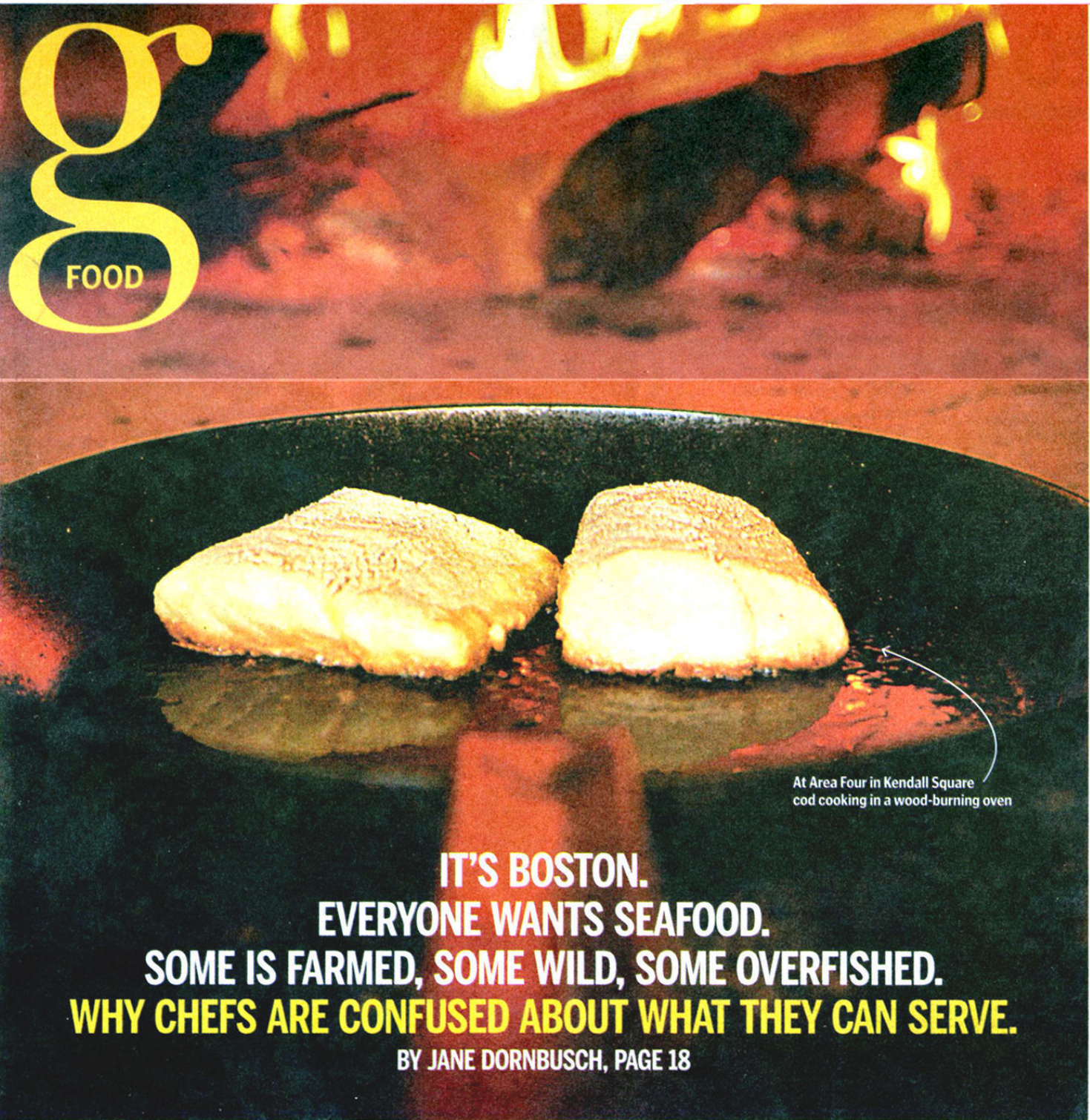
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MUSHTIFYING
 Today: Cloudy, snow in p.m.
 High 36-41, Low 32-37.
 Tomorrow: 4-8 inches of snow.
 High 33-38, Low 28-33.
 High Tide: 3:54 a.m. 4:29 p.m.
 Sunrise: 6:21 a.m. Sunset: 5:33 p.m.
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FOOD



At Area Four in Kendall Square cod cooking in a wood-burning oven

**IT'S BOSTON.
 EVERYONE WANTS SEAFOOD.
 SOME IS FARMED, SOME WILD, SOME OVERFISHED.
 WHY CHEFS ARE CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN SERVE.**

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cover story

WHY CHEFS ARE CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT FISH THEY CAN SERVE

'SUSTAINABILITY' HAS MANY GUISES: LISTS, DINER QUESTIONS, LEGAL RESTRICTIONS . . .

BY JANE DORNBUSCH | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF

Jeremy Sewall, chef and co-owner of Island Creek Oyster Bar, led a seminar there last month titled "Know Your Fish."

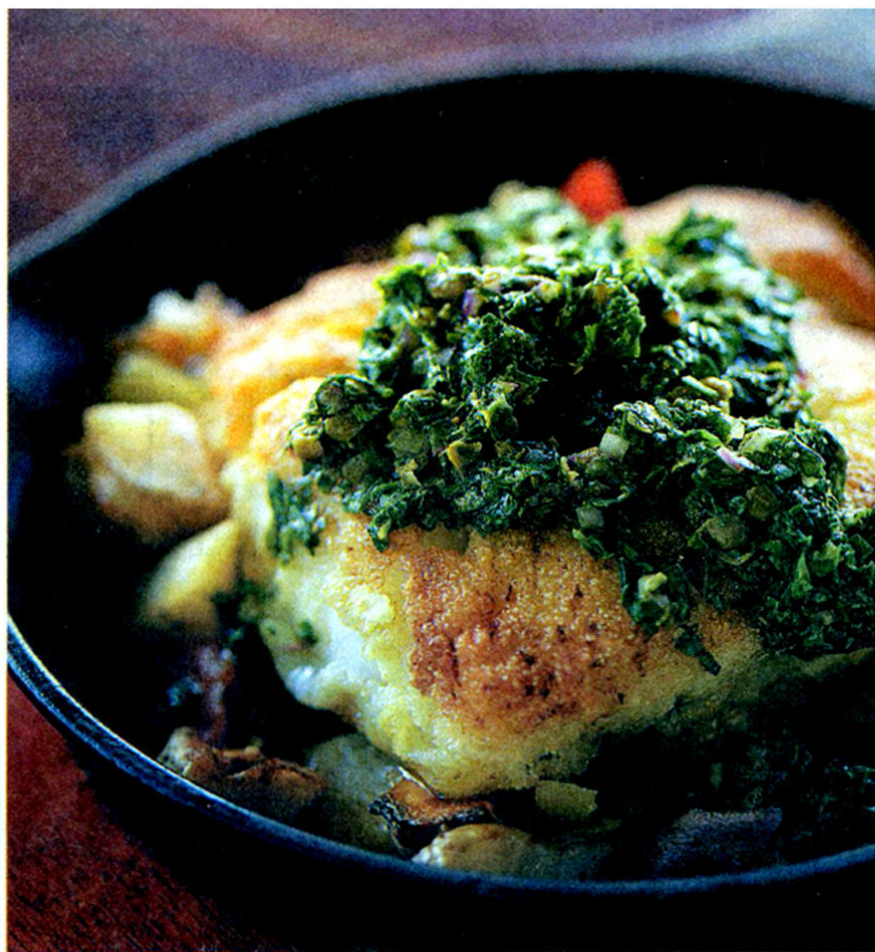
If you want to see Boston chefs get hot under the collar, throw their hands up in confusion, or sigh in resignation, just ask them about seafood sustainability.

The topic has been under discussion so long it's gone from buzzword to cliché, and consumers might be forgiven for thinking that sustainability has been resolved. Not so, say chefs and seafood market owners. But they do need something to go by. Michael Leviton, of Lumiere in West Newton and Area Four in Cambridge, offers this definition from the United Nations: "The ability to provide for the needs of today without compromising our ability to provide for the needs of the future." But, he adds, "That sounds all nice and simple, but at the end of the day, it really isn't."

Here's another definition from Melissa Kogut, executive director of Chefs Collaborative, a national chef network promoting sustainable food practices: "Sustainable seafood is wild caught or farmed with consideration for the long-term viability of the species, affected eco-systems, and fishing communities."

Nor does that seem to clarify the subject for working chefs. "I've been in the seafood business for 40 years," says Jasper White, chef and partner of the Summer Shack restaurants. "The whole thing about sustainability is that the more I learn, the more confused I get."

Most chefs are concerned about sustainability — whatever their definition — but they also have businesses to run, customer expectations to meet, and, in many cases, ties to the local fishing community. On top of all that, they have to be mindful of state officials vowing, after a Boston Globe investigation last year, to crack down on restaurants, supermarkets, and seafood



YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

At Area Four this month, chef Michael Leviton served cod caught off Chatham.

What some fishmongers are selling and what chefs are buying

Sustainability is a slippery issue, and at the end of the day, chefs and seafood sellers are left to make decisions that may involve compromise. Here are some of the choices they made recently, as they juggle considerations about what is local and seasonal, with price and demand.

Carl Fantasia of New Deal Seafood, a shop in Cambridge: "We've been selling a lot of hake as an alternative [to cod], and customers are very happy with it. Pollock is another one we feature here."

Kim Marden of Captain Marden's Seafood in Wellesley: "Nantucket-based scallops; wild striped bass, not from New England, but from Maryland. And another one is silver hake from the Gulf of Maine; there's a lot of hake being caught and price is pretty reasonable."

Tony Maws, chef and owner of Craigie on Main in Cambridge: "Today, I'm looking at oysters, from Maine, octopus from Spain, smelts from Nova Scotia — not Maine because it's too warm — black bass from Maryland, organic arctic char from Iceland. On the tasting menu, Nantucket scallops and Tasmanian sea trout from New Zealand."

Steve Johnson, chef and owner of Rendezvous in Cambridge: "PEI [Prince Edward Island] mussels. Oysters from all over the place, squid, mackerel."

Michael Serpa, chef of Neptune Oyster: "Obviously oysters and clams, both excellent choices that are sustainable and good for the environment. The guys from Duxbury, at Island Creek Oysters, drive them up every day on the truck."

Michael Scelfo, executive chef of Russell House Tavern in Cambridge: "I go with Trace and Trust [a Rhode Island company working to make seafood sourcing more transparent]. If they have tilefish this week, that's what I'll serve. Last week they only had fluke, so I sold fluke."

JANE DORNBUSCH

suppliers that mislabel fish. All of this drives decisions about what to purchase.

"This is not an ivory tower situation," says Steve Johnson, chef and owner of Rendezvous restaurant in Cambridge, and a recreational fisherman. "The public perception of chefs is that we operate in some sort of sphere that only has to do with ideas and ideologies." Instead, a restaurant owner has to be pragmatic, he says. "We have a lot of practical considerations."

Among those is a desire to support local fishermen, who are frequently at loggerheads with environmentalists and other proponents of sustainability. Fishermen have long had to contend with government-set catch limits meant to help stocks of stressed and overfished species rebound. Earlier this month, the New England Fishery Management Council voted to recommend a 20 percent reduction in the limits on cod caught in the Gulf of Maine. Maine shrimp was closed on Feb. 17 because the catch limit, down considerably from previous years, had been met. And the complexity of the issues sometimes creates surprising alliances. A public hearing was scheduled to be held yesterday on proposed legislation that would eliminate commercial fishing of striped bass in Massachusetts. That sounds like something the sustainability folks would support, but Chefs Collaborative is urging its members to oppose the bill, backed by a Maine-based group representing recreational fishermen. The chefs organization argues that commercial striped bass is local and sustain-

able and that commercial fishermen have already had to comply with many other catch limits.

And while fishermen understand the importance of limits over the long haul — after all, they have a vested interest in making sure seafood remains healthy and plentiful — they sometimes question the science that goes into decisions about limits. Some say you cannot count the number of fish in the sea. "It's like trying to count trees and the trees are moving. It's not black and white — it's just not," says Jeremy Sewall, chef and co-owner of Island Creek Oyster Bar.

Sewall recently conducted a "Know Your Fish" seminar at the restaurant, which addressed mislabeling, species identification, and, of course, sustainability. He has occasionally taken some heat for his menu choices, but defends serving bluefin tuna, a fish caught off both coasts, which the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch says to avoid. At one point Sewall noted that the tuna was locally caught. He says he has heard the stocks are more plentiful now than they have been in 20 years.

Certainly not all customers are concerned. Tony Maws, chef and owner of Craigie on Main in Cambridge, says that when he put bluefin on the menu last fall, "A couple of people asked questions, but I sold the bejesus out of it."

Another lightning rod for sustainability issues is farmed salmon. Once the poster fish for environmentally harmful aquaculture practices, farmed salmon, some now believe, can be a responsible choice; as long as it's sourced

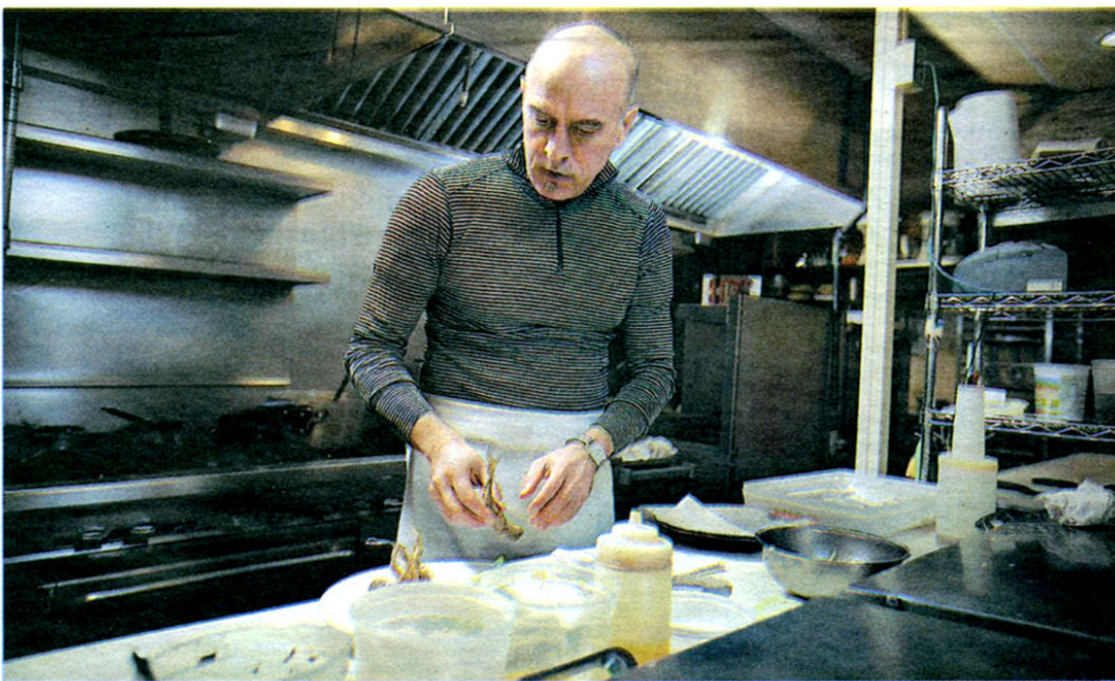
carefully. Seafood Watch recommends avoiding farmed salmon except Coho, sake, and silver. But both Sewall and White are serving farm-raised salmon from the Faroe Islands; Maws uses organic farmed salmon from the Shetland Islands (though even the word organic, when applied to farmed fish, raises some questions).

"When you're talking about farm-raised fish, it's like buying a car," says White. "You can buy a Cadillac or you can buy a Yugo." Other chefs, such as Leviton and Michael Scelfo, executive chef at Russell House Tavern in Cambridge, flat out refuse to serve farmed salmon.

Locally caught seafood pretty much has unanimous support. "I would rather serve squid from Rhode Island and try to make that work, espousing all of its really good qualities, than fly hiramasa from the South Pacific that has been given the stamp of approval from sustainability guides," says Johnson. "It costs a lot of money to bring that in, it's the world's biggest carbon footprint, and it mucks up the question of sustainability."

Ah, those sustainability guides. Besides Monterey Bay Aquarium, the New England Aquarium also issues what it calls Ocean-Friendly Seafood recommendations. They might seem like a handy tool, but they have few fans among area chefs. Says Chris Schlesinger, owner of East Coast Grill in Cambridge, "Those lists are a simple answer to a complex problem, and they keep people from trying to understand the complexity of it." Most chefs recom-

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DINA RUDICK/GLOBE STAFF

New England Aquarium's approved fish list

Chefs and those in the seafood industry say that seafood watch lists put out by various organizations, naming some species as ocean-friendly, should be viewed with a grain of salt. They do not tell the whole story. When the New England Aquarium put one together a couple of years ago, they asked Kim Marden, of Captain Marden's Seafood in Wellesley, for his advice.

"I said, 'I don't agree with what's on it. Out of the six or seven species, I agree with one. If you're looking for someone to say, this is great, you called the wrong guy,'" Marden told them. "Their minds were already made up."

There's very little consensus about sustainable seafood. Here is a partial list that gets the New England Aquarium's seal of approval.

WILD CAUGHT

Bluefish (New England)
Cod, Pacific (US hook-caught)
Haddock (longline, New England)
Halibut (Pacific)
Mackerel (New England)
Mahimahi (US)
Pollock (Alaska)
Salmon (Alaska)
Sardines (Pacific)
Squid (US)

FARMED

Arctic char (Iceland, Norway, Canada, US)
Barramundi (New England)
Bay scallops (New England)
Catfish (US)
Clams, hard-shell (New England)
Mussels, blue
Oysters
Rainbow trout (US)
Shrimp, white (US)
Striped bass, hybrid
Sturgeon (US)
Tilapia (US, South and Central America)

SOURCE: NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM

'THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CHEFS IS THAT WE OPERATE IN SOME SORT OF SPHERE THAT ONLY HAS TO DO WITH IDEAS AND IDEOLOGIES. WE HAVE A LOT OF PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.'

STEVE JOHNSON (above)
CHEF AND OWNER OF RENDEZVOUS RESTAURANT IN CAMBRIDGE

Continued from preceding page

mend that customers who are concerned about sustainability delve deeper, as the chefs themselves do. Several mentioned that they are currently reading books on seafood, such as "The Most Important Fish in the Sea," by H. Bruce Franklin, about menhaden; "Four Fish," by Paul Greenberg; and "Beautiful Swimmers," by William Warner.

Chefs also say that customers seem concerned about seafood sustainability — but only to a point. "For all the savvy ones," says Scelfo, "there are ones who quite frankly don't know. They just want to go out and have a good time. They're not looking to do a 'Portlandia' skit. You can go a little overboard with this stuff."

While professionals may have access to more information and seafood sources than the rest of us, that does not make their choices any easier. Says Leviton, "We're just trying to do a little better today than we did yesterday, trying to make well-informed, rational decisions. Are we going to screw up? Hell, yeah."

"But that doesn't mean we shouldn't make the effort."

Jane Dornbusch can be reached at jdornbusch@verizon.net.

Warm salad of sauteed squid, arugula, and cannellini beans

Serves 4

The key to great texture with squid is to just barely cook it through. Once it is white and firm, it has cooked long enough. Use Turkish Maras pepper or Spanish smoked paprika.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 pound squid bodies and tentacles
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 can (14 ounces) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ teaspoon Turkish Maras pepper or Spanish smoked paprika
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 3 large handfuls (about 3 cups) baby arugula
- 1 fennel bulb, thinly sliced or shaved on a mandoline
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup pitted Kalamata olives, chopped
- Grated rind and juice of ½ lemon

1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Cook the squid for 1 minute. Add the garlic and beans and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes more or until squid is just turning white and firm. Take care not to overcook it.
 2. Tip the squid into a bowl. Add Maras pepper or paprika, and salt. Taste for seasoning and add more Maras pepper or paprika, if you like.
 3. In another bowl, toss together arugula, fennel, scallions, olives, lemon rind and juice, salt and black pepper, and remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Top with the squid and bean mixture.
- Catherine Smart. Adapted from *Rendezvous*



ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF

Some of the fish on display at chef Jeremy Sewall's "Know Your Fish" seminar at the Island Creek Oyster Bar.



SHERYL JULIAN/GLOBE STAFF

Quick fish stew with tomatoes, ginger, and potatoes

Serves 4

Steam golden potatoes while a simple tomato sauce, made with bottled clam juice, simmers briefly. Add the fish and after a few minutes, the entire dish is done. It's practically instant, low in fat, and satisfying.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 large Yukon Gold or Yellow Finn potatoes, cut into ¼-inch slices 1 tablespoon olive oil 1 piece (2 inches) fresh ginger, finely chopped 1 can (16 ounces) whole tomatoes, crushed in a bowl 1 cup bottled clam juice ½ cup water ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper Salt, to taste 1½ pounds boneless hake, haddock, pollock, or cod | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fit a large saucepan with a steamer insert. Add water to come up to the level of the steamer and bring to a boil. Add the potatoes, cover, and steam for 8 minutes or until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a skewer. 2. Meanwhile, in a large flameproof casserole, heat the olive oil. Cook the ginger, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Add the clam juice, water, red pepper, and salt. Bring to a boil and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. 4. While the sauce simmers, cut the fish into 2-inch pieces, cutting along its natural lines. Add the fish to the pot in one layer. Spoon the sauce over the fish and press it gently into the hot liquid. Cover and cook for 5 minutes or until the fish is opaque. Taste for seasoning and add more salt or red pepper, if you like. 5. In each of 4 shallow bowls, spoon potatoes, fish, and sauce. Sprinkle with parsley. <i>Sheryl Julian</i> |
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Haddock with roasted cauliflower and caper-raisin-pine nut vinaigrette

Serves 4

Don't be alarmed by the length of this recipe; each component is simple to make and the whole dish comes together in under 30 minutes. First, make a simple caper-raisin vinaigrette; stir in toasted pine nuts just before serving to preserve their toasty crunch. Next, pan-roast cauliflower, which turns nutty and sweet, and sprinkle it with parsley. That makes a bed for crisp, semolina-crust haddock. Because haddock fillets tend to be long and thin, you will need two skillets (or cook the fish in two batches).

VINAIGRETTE

- ¼ cup pine nuts
- Juice of 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 2 tablespoons golden raisins, soaked in hot water for 10 minutes and drained
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

1. Set oven at 350 degrees. In a baking dish, toast the pine nuts about 7 minutes, stirring once, or until they are lightly browned.
2. In a small bowl, whisk the lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Gradually whisk in the olive oil. Stir in the capers, golden raisins, and chives. (Mix in pine nuts just before serving.)

CAULIFLOWER

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 head cauliflower, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

- proof handle over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add cauliflower and cook, stirring often, for 5 minutes until lightly browned.
3. Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook for 10 minutes until cauliflower is cooked through. Sprinkle with parsley.

1. Set the oven at 450 degrees.
2. In a large skillet with a heat-

HADDOCK

- 1½ pounds skinless, boneless haddock
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 egg
- ½ cup milk
- 1 cup semolina flour
- ½ cup canola oil
- Juice of ½ lemon

1. Have on hand 2 large skillets and a rimmed baking sheet.
2. Sprinkle the haddock with salt and pepper.
3. In a medium bowl whisk together egg and milk. Put the semolina flour on a large plate.

4. Dip the haddock in the egg mixture, then dredge in the semolina. Transfer haddock to the baking sheet while you heat the skillets.
5. Add ¼ cup of the oil to each of the skillets. Heat over medium-high heat. Cook 2 pieces of haddock in each pan for about 3 minutes on a side or until cooked through. Sprinkle the fish with lemon juice.
6. Divide the cauliflower among 4 plates. Top each with a piece of haddock, and drizzle with the vinaigrette. *Catherine Smart. Adapted from Area Four*

Mussels in white wine with saffron

Serves 4

Let the mussels soak in a bowl of cold water for an hour, then lift them out, transfer to a colander, and scrub the shells under a cold tap.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ teaspoon saffron threads Pinch of sugar ½ cup boiling water 2 tablespoons butter 3 shallots, finely chopped 1 clove garlic, finely chopped 2 cups white wine Salt and pepper, to taste 4 pounds mussels, soaked and scrubbed ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley 1 baguette, thickly sliced and toasted <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In a small bowl, use the back of a knife to crush the saffron threads with the sugar until they are pulverized. Add the boiling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> water and stir well. 2. In a soup pot, melt the butter and cook the shallots and garlic, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. Add the saffron liquid, wine, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil and simmer for 2 minutes. 3. Add the mussels, cover with the lid, and steam for 5 to 7 minutes, shaking the pan to redistribute the shells, or until they are all open. Use a large metal spoon to stir the shells near the end of cooking. Discard any mussels that have not opened. 4. Divide the mussels among 4 shallow bowls. Add plenty of cooking liquid to each one. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with toasted French bread. <i>Sheryl Julian</i> |
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SHERYL JULIAN/GLOBE STAFF