

**TITLE: THAI-STYLE POACHED HADDOCK, WITH FRAGRANT COCONUT AND LEMONGRASS RISOTTO, CRISPY FISH SKIN, PICKLED AUBERGINE**



*I love the flavours of Thai food – the lightness, the fragrance, and the intricate, delicate balance of herbs and spices. It’s a cuisine I’m still trying to learn more about and master. I’m still getting there, but loving it! I’ve mentioned the great variety of meat in the North East, where I’m studying, and the fish is just as special. When I was last browsing the local market I saw a range of lovely firm white fish, so thought how lovely it would taste poached in a Thai broth. In this recipe I’ve gone for natural, undyed smoked haddock, but any firm-fleshed white fish will work brilliantly (halibut, pollack, cod, or monkfish in particular). The poaching broth is coconut-based, scented with a variety of Thai aromats and spices, and the fish is cooked gently so that it becomes soft and flaking. This is accompanied by an unusual Thai-inspired coconut and lemongrass risotto, again incorporating various herbs and aromats, as well as a tangy pickled aubergine. For texture, I’ve also added toasted coconut and some crispy fish skin, but you could also use crushed peanuts or fried shallots.*

### **Ingredients**

For the crispy fish skin

- skin from haddock portions

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- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil

### For the risotto base

- 2 lemongrass stalks, tough outer layers removed (reserve these for poaching the fish), roughly chopped
- 3 shallots
- 4 kaffir lime leaves
- 1 green chilli, seeds and white membrane removed
- zest 2 limes
- 4 tbsp coriander roots and leaves (mixed), roughly chopped
- 4 tbsp Thai basil roots and leaves (mixed)
- thumb-sized piece of fresh root ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled

### For the risotto

- risotto base (see above)
- 125ml (small glass) dry white wine
- 500ml hot fish or vegetable stock
- 1 x 400ml can reduced fat coconut milk (use full fat if you prefer)
- salt and pepper, to taste
- small handful chopped coriander and Thai basil
- juice of 1 lime

### For the pickled aubergine

- 1 large or 2 small aubergines
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 small shallot, finely-chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 3 tbsp Chinese black or red wine vinegar
- 1 1/2 tbsp caster sugar (golden or white)
- 1 tsp cornflour, dissolved into 2 tbsp water
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander leaves

### For the poached haddock



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- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- left-over lemongrass outer layers from risotto base
- 3 medium cloves of garlic, peeled and halved
- 2 shallots, roughly chopped
- 1 mild green chilli, sliced
- 3 strips of lime peel (about half a lime)
- 1 thumb-sized knob of ginger
- 1 large stalk of lemongrass, bruised and roughly chopped
- 2 x cans reduced-fat coconut milk (use full-fat if you prefer)
- 2 tsp fish sauce
- small handful of coriander leaves and stalks
- small handful of Thai basil leaves and stalks
- 4 skin-on and boneless pieces of haddock (loin or fillet) (about 160-180g each)

To serve

- small handful of fresh coriander and Thai basil (combined), leaves picked
- 1 red chilli, thinly-sliced
- lime wedges
- toasted coconut
- 4 small pak choi, steamed and halved

### Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C.
2. Begin by prepping the fish. Carefully remove the skin from each haddock portion and scrape off any remaining flesh, taking care not to tear the skin (there should be no flesh remaining and the skin should feel very thin). Cut each piece in half (you should end up with 8 neat rectangles; you could also cut the skin into rectangles if you prefer).
3. Whisk together the soy sauce, fish sauce and ½ tbsp oil, then rub the mixture gently into the fish skins. Drizzle ½ tbsp. oil over an oven tray, ensuring an even coverage. Place the prepared fish skin pieces onto the prepared tray, scale side down. Rub the bottom of another baking tray – large enough to cover all the fish skins – with oil, then place



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over the top of the tray of fish skin, making sure the skins are completely covered.

4. Place into the preheated oven and cook for 5 minutes. Check the fish – it should feel crisp and not soft – and if it is still soft/oily/wet then put back in the oven for another 5-10 minutes until done, taking care not to burn. When done, remove from the oven and allow to cool completely. Reserve in an air-tight container for plating.
5. For the pickled aubergine, mix together the sauce ingredients in a small bowl.
6. Slice the aubergine in 4 lengthways then remove the spongy centre. Chop the remaining aubergine into small dice.
7. Heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat, then add the chopped shallot and garlic and sweat down for 3-5 minutes, then add the diced aubergine to the pan with the onion and garlic. Cook until the aubergine is soft and browned on all sides (about 5 minutes).
8. Pour over the sauce. Stir together, turn the heat down to low, and cook for about 3 minutes.
9. Combine the stock and coconut milk in a small saucepan, bring to a simmer over a medium-low heat.
10. For the risotto base, place all ingredients into a blender and pulse until finely chopped. Add the oil and pulse a few times only, just to thoroughly chop and mix through.
11. Use a flexible spatula to get all the base into a large saucepan, then sweat over a medium-low heat until softened and fragrant.
12. Stir in the risotto rice until the rice grains are thoroughly coated and turning translucent.
13. Add the wine and cook until the liquid has been absorbed.
14. Reduce the heat to medium-low. One ladle at a time, start adding the hot coconut milk and stock mixture to the risotto, stirring constantly, until the rice is tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed.
15. When the risotto is finished, stir in the chopped fresh herbs and lime juice, then season to taste with salt and pepper.
16. While the risotto is gently cooking, prepare the poached fish. In a large, straight-sided sauté pan, heat the oil over a medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the chopped garlic, shallot, chilli, ginger and lemongrass and cook, stirring, until softened and the shallot is translucent (about 2-3 minutes).



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17. Add the coconut milk, tough lemongrass stalks, fish sauce, lime peel, coriander and Thai basil, then stir briefly to incorporate. Place the haddock portions into the broth, ensuring that it is submerged in the liquid. Bring the liquid to a gentle simmer and cook the fish for 5 minutes, or until soft but still holding its shape. Remove from the heat, then carefully remove the fish from the poaching liquor with a slotted spoon and place on a plate ready for service.
18. To serve, take a plate of your choice (slightly warmed up), and place a spoon of the pickled aubergine onto the plate, then top with a piece of the poached smoked haddock. Place a small mound of the risotto on the side and scatter over the herbs, chilli and coconut. Place 2 steamed pak choi halves alongside, then place a piece of crispy fish skin on top of the fish. Carefully spoon some of the poaching liquor around the plate, then garnish with fresh lime wedges and serve.

