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# Pan-Sauced White Fish

The fish is interchangeable. The technique is everything.

*This is not a recipe about wolffish. It is a recipe about heat discipline and a butter-wine pan sauce that works on nearly any white fish in the ocean — cod, haddock, hake, flounder, halibut. The fish changes. The method does not.*

Master this once. Cook it for a lifetime.

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## THE STORY

This is not a recipe about wolffish. Wolffish is magnificent — dense, sweet, meatier than almost anything else in the ocean — but it's also hard to find and easy to replace. The real recipe here is a butter-wine pan sauce and the heat discipline to pull it off. Get those two things right and the fish almost doesn't matter.

This works on cod, haddock, hake, flounder, grouper, and most shellfish. It will not work on mackerel or bluefish — those oils fight the butter. This method is built for white fish, but it also works on salmon — just know you are cooking a different animal. One rule on the wine: do not cook with anything you would not drink.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb** white fish fillets (wolffish, cod, haddock, flounder, hake)
- 1/3 to 1/2 cup** dry white wine — or see substitutions below
- 2 cloves** garlic (~10 g), minced
- 1 small** shallot, finely minced
- 2 Tbsp** salted butter
- 1 tsp** kosher salt (for dry brine)
- to finish** flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

**No wine?** Use clam juice or fish stock — same technique, same result. In a pinch, chicken stock works. White grape juice cut with a splash of white wine vinegar is a solid non-alcoholic option.



### SOURCING & PRICE

**Wolffish:** \$15–20/lb when you can find it — specialty fish counters, good fishmongers.

**Cod / Haddock / Flounder:** \$6–10/lb at most fish counters.

**Estimated cost per serving:**

Wolffish: ~\$8–10 | Cod: ~\$4–6

## METHOD

- 1. DRY BRINE** Season fillets generously with kosher salt on all sides. Place uncovered on a rack or plate in the refrigerator for 4 hours. This draws surface moisture out, concentrates flavor, and sets you up for a cleaner sear. Pat dry before cooking.
- 2. REDUCE THE WINE** Pour 1/3 to 1/2 cup white wine into a cold stainless steel pan. Set heat to low–medium low. Let it reduce at a gentle simmer — about 4 to 6 minutes. You are looking for a slightly syrupy consistency; the bubbles will slow and grow larger as the liquid tightens. Do not rush this. A hard boil turns it bitter.
- 3. COOL THE PAN** Turn heat off. Let the pan rest 2–3 minutes. This step matters: butter added to a screaming-hot wine reduction will pop, splatter, and break. You want the pan warm, not volcanic.
- 4. BUILD THE SAUCE** Add 2 Tbsp salted butter. Return heat to medium low. As the butter melts, add minced shallot and garlic. Stir to combine. Keep the heat low — you want the garlic to soften and turn translucent, not brown. Cook 2 minutes, stirring occasionally, until fragrant and softened. The pan should smell like something you want to eat.
- 5. ADD THE FISH** Carefully move the shallot and garlic to the edges. Lay each fillet flat in the pan — give every piece as much contact with the surface as possible. It doesn't have to be perfect. Cover with a lid. Set a timer for 2 minutes.
- 6. TURN & BASTE** Flip fillets carefully. Spoon sauce over the top of each piece. Cover again. Set another 2-minute timer.
- 7. REST IN THE PAN** Turn the heat off. Keep the lid on. Let the pan rest for 3 minutes. Residual heat will finish the cooking. Most white fish needs only 4–6 minutes total cook time. Trust the process.
- 8. CHECK DONENESS** After the rest, check with a fork — the fish should flake easily and read opaque throughout. An instant-read thermometer should show 145°F at the thickest point. Do not overcook.
- 9. PLATE** Transfer fillets to a warm serving platter. Pour every drop of sauce from the pan over the fish. Finish with finely chopped flat-leaf parsley.

*When you are ready to go further. Once this method is second nature, try skipping the lid and letting the fish build some color directly on the pan. Deglaze with wine before adding the butter and scrape up everything that stuck. Those browned bits are called fond — concentrated flavor that becomes part of your sauce. Same dish. More depth. One more tool in your hands.*

### BEGINNER CONFIDENCE CHECK

You are doing it right if:

- ✓ The wine bubbles gently — not aggressively.
- ✓ The butter melts without browning.
- ✓ The garlic smells sweet, not toasted.
- ✓ The fish flakes cleanly and still looks moist.
- ✓ The sauce looks glossy, not greasy.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Heat is everything. Butter burns at 350°F. Stay below it. A gentle simmer builds the sauce; a hard boil breaks it.
- The dry brine is not optional. Four hours of kosher salt concentrates flavor and sets up a cleaner cook.
- Creativity is rewarded. Tarragon. Lemon. A clump of lump crabmeat on top before the lid goes on. All of it works.

## EQUIPMENT

<b>Stainless pan + lid</b>	Stainless is the right call.
<b>Silicone spatula</b>	Fish is delicate. Use it.
<b>Timer</b>	2-minute intervals. Non-negotiable.
<b>Thermometer</b>	Optional. Target: 145°F.
<b>Serving platter</b>	Warm it while the fish cooks.

## SERVE WITH

*This technique is the meal. What goes alongside is up to you.*

**Lower carb:** Roasted asparagus, sautéed spinach, cauliflower mash, simple greens

**Higher carb:** White or brown rice, crusty bread to catch the sauce

## NUTRITION

Per serving (1/2 lb fish + half sauce). Based on wolffish. Values will vary slightly by fish species chosen.

CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	CARBS
<b>~322</b>	<b>45 g</b>	<b>13.5 g</b>	<b>2.3 g</b>
per serving	57% of kcal	40% of kcal	3% of kcal

## KEY NUTRIENTS

NUTRIENT	AMOUNT / %DV	WHY IT MATTERS
<b>Omega-3 Fatty Acids</b>	~800–1,200 mg	Wolffish is a cold-water fish with meaningful omega-3 content. Anti-inflammatory, cardiovascular support.
<b>Vitamin B12</b>	~3–4 mcg (~125–167% DV)	White fish is one of the best dietary sources. Critical for neurological function and red blood cell production.
<b>Selenium</b>	~45–55 mcg (~80–100% DV)	Thyroid regulation, antioxidant defense, immune function.
<b>Phosphorus</b>	~350–400 mg (~40% DV)	Bone and teeth structure, cellular energy (ATP), kidney function.
<b>Potassium</b>	~500–600 mg (~13% DV)	Blood pressure regulation, muscle and nerve function.
<b>Vitamin D</b>	~200–400 IU (~25–50% DV)	Most Americans are deficient. Fatty cold-water fish is one of the few reliable food sources.
<b>Iodine</b>	~50–100 mcg (~33–67% DV)	Thyroid hormone synthesis. Chronically underconsumed in modern diets.
<b>Magnesium</b>	~40–50 mg (~10–12% DV)	Enzymatic function, sleep, blood sugar regulation.

\* Daily Value percentages based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Nutrient values are estimates. Remaining caloric mass (~3%) is accounted for by water, minerals, and connective tissue that contribute no calories. Protein + Fat + Carb percentages sum to 100% of caloric contribution.



**MWIN Take:** A pound of quality white fish between two people is not excessive — it's correct. This meal is built around dense, complete animal protein, fat from real butter, and almost no carbohydrate load. That is a metabolically sound dinner. Fear of fish fat is misplaced. Fear of butter is a marketing problem, not a nutrition problem.

Van Potts is the Eastern U.S. Brand Ambassador for Keenan Winery and principal of Preston-Layne & Partners, Inc. King Street Kitchen and MWIN are his culinary and metabolic wellness platforms. "Source the Best. Cook the Truth. Serve the Soul."™