

Salmon En Croûte



See video Tutorial by Chef John at <https://youtu.be/VzKOLRDkAy8>

Start with Mise en place (French pronunciation: [mi zã 'plas]) which is a French culinary phrase that means "putting in place" or "everything in its place". It refers to the setup required before cooking.) Have all ingredients prepped (peeled, chopped, measured, etc.) before you even begin to cook.

Ingredients:

1 onion (or 2 shallots) peeled and minced
4 cloves of garlic (peeled and minced)
1 large container fresh spinach (can use 18 oz frozen)
1 sheet puff pastry (rolled out on flour-dusted parchment paper to approx. 10"x15")
4 salmon fillets (wild caught or farm raised from sustainable sources)
3 large free-range eggs
1 lemon (zest)
2 tbl of Red Pesto (can use jar or make your own ahead of time using Chef John's Red Pesto Recipe below)

As needed:

olive oil
kosher salt
fresh cracked black pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°

We begin by steaming the fresh spinach in a large skillet with a few tablespoons of water on medium/high heat until spinach has released its water. Remove from heat and use a clean kitchen towel to ring out all excess water from the spinach. You will be surprised that spinach is 80% water and by doing this step, you will prevent your pastry from becoming soggy. Note: if using frozen spinach, allow it to completely thaw and use the same technique to wring out the water. Set aside.

In a large non-stick pan on a medium/low heat, with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, cook minced onion 3-5 minutes or until softened, stirring regularly. Add minced garlic and cook for another 2-3 minutes. Finely grate in the lemon zest, then cook for another minute. Stir in the prepared spinach, cover, and cook for 3-5 minutes, then remove the lid and cook for another 2-3 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Unroll the pastry and place it, still on its paper, on a cookie sheet. Spoon out the spinach mixture and spread onto the pastry leaving a 2-3 inch border around the outer edges. Place the salmon fillets on top, 1-2 inches apart. Use the parchment paper to help you fold in the pastry edges to snugly encase the salmon edges and while leaving a majority of the salmon exposed on the top.

Whisk eggs and use a small amount to lightly brush the exposed pastry. This step will help add a nice sheen and golden brown color to the pastry as it cooks. Place on lower rack of oven and cook for 10 minutes or until the puff pastry begins to lightly brown.

While the salmon is cooking, whisk in 2 tbs of Red Pesto to the remaining egg mixture. When 10 minutes is up, pull out the tray and pour the egg/pesto mixture over the salmon and into the gaps. Return to the bottom of the oven for a final 15 minutes, or until the pastry is golden brown and the egg is set. Cut and serve with lemon wedges, for squeezing over. I often serve this with a mixed green salad lightly dressed with a lemon-vinaigrette.

Special Tip: If you like extra sauce, put the remaining pesto in a medium sized skillet and add ¼ cup chicken stock and cook for 5 minutes. Add ½ cup cream and stir until well combined. Check seasoning.

Pesto Ingredients:

1/2 Roasted Red Bell Pepper (or ¼ cup from jar of roasted red pepper)

¼ cup Sun dried tomato (from jar, packed in oil)

2 peeled cloves of garlic

4-5 fresh basil leaves

¼ cup pine nuts

3 tbs grated parmesan cheese

1 tbs fresh lemon juice

¾ cup oil

Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes

As needed:

kosher salt

fresh cracked black pepper

If you are making your own pesto and using a fresh red bell pepper, Chef John's video will demonstrate how to roast the red bell pepper by laying it over high flame to blacken the outer skin of the pepper. Another method is to roast the red pepper in the oven at 450°. Cut peppers in half, remove stem, seeds & membranes. Lay cut-side down on a foil-lined backing sheet and cook 15-20 minutes until skins are very dark and charred. Place the pepper in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap for 5 minutes to help the steam loosen the skin. Let peppers cool for a few minutes, peel skins and discard. Once you have removed the skin, slice ½ of pepper (save other ½ for a future recipe).

In a medium sized food processor, add all of the pesto ingredients listed above except for the olive oil. Process until all ingredients are finely chopped. Stop and scrape down sides and pulse again. Drizzle in ½ cup of olive oil and check consistency. If it appears too thick to easily spread, add up to an additional ¼ cup of olive oil while continuing to process.