

03/18/10 - Helena's Gefilte Fish

Bite into a piece of Helena's homemade gefilte fish. The sweet, Polish style of this mild fish with a bit of eye opening beet colored horseradish will make you fall in love with gefilte fish.

My friend Suzette's mom, Helena is a treasure. She is an octogenarian, lively, witty, sharp as a tack, and very gracious. Every Passover for the last couple of years she invites me to her home a few days before the Seder to watch her make 'real' gefilte fish and have a bit of lunch.

Helena, who was born in Poland, and came to the United States after WWII, makes fish the old fashion way. She carefully hand picks the whole fresh fish at the fish monger and gives explicit instructions on how she wants it ground 'clean' with minimal bits of skin or scale. She has the fish monger wrap the heads and bones in a separate package to use for flavoring the stock. This convenience of being able to have the fish cleaned and ground for you is the only concession to modernity. She still works the fish with a mezzaluna in a wood bowl by hand, until it is the right texture to hold its shape when made into balls.

The beauty of Helena's fish is that it has no oil added and no filler to bind it such as matzo meal. It is gluten free and low calorie as well as delicious. This is nothing like that grey colored stuff in jars in the market that we used to make fun of when we were children. Buy the freshest fish you can find and you will have fantastic results.

I am looking forward to going to Helena's home once again this year in a few days for our little fish making party and lunch.

8 pounds of whole white fish

4 pounds of whole carp

Have the fish monger clean and bone the fish, setting aside the fish head and bones in a separate package for your fish stock. Next have them grind the fish for you.

For Stock

Heads and bones of fish

1 onion

1 parsnip

4 celery ribs

4 large carrots, cut in circles or diagonals about 1/8 inch thick

Salt

pepper (optional)

3 tablespoons of sugar

1 very large stock pot of simmering water

For the fish balls

6 pounds of ground fish (net)

2 medium onions

5 eggs

1 cup of sugar or to taste

1 teaspoon of salt or to taste

pepper (optional)

Wash all the vegetables for the stock. Add the fish bones and heads and vegetables to the simmering water. Season the water with salt and pepper . Add the sugar to the water. Once the stock is simmering away you can take the fish out of the refrigerator and prepare it.





Place the fish in a large wooden bowl. In a food processor, grind the onions after you peel them and cut them into a large dice. Next, add the eggs to the onions and process. Add this mixture to the fish. Season the fish with salt and sugar. Begin chopping the fish with the mezzaluna to combine all the ingredients and change the texture of the fish to a sticky mass. Taste the fish and adjust the seasoning. Keep cutting the fish with the mezzaluna for a few more moments.

Prepare a small bowl of ice water. Check and see if the stock has turned into a flavorful broth. If the stock is ready, wet your clean hands in the ice water and gently form an oval ball of fish. The fish should hold together easily. Slide the ball off the tip of your fingers into the boiling fish stock. Repeat until you have formed all the balls. Cover the stock pot and reduce heat to a very low boil/simmer. Cook the gefilte fish for about one and one half hours. Cool down the stock, then remove the balls, taking care not to break them, gently placing them in a glass baking dish for storing. Decorate each piece with a circle or diagonal of carrot. Put a few spoonfuls of the fish broth in the baking dish as well, then cover and refrigerate. This keeps for about 4-5 d







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