



COOKING WITH DOLPHIN

6 EASY RECIPES THAT WON'T HAVE
YOU JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

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Publicaciones Rio Grande de Frutas, Semillas y Tabaco

Introduction

The first time I was offered to taste dolphin, I was dismayed. I had always thought of these curious mini whales as being far too slimy to possibly offer a tasty meal. I was disgusted by the mere sight of their blow holes.

However, these were the early 2000's in China and I had been invited to a traditional baijiu business dinner, the kind where top executives share a meal, bond over enormous quantities of the local spirit and sign large business deals. Inviting your guest to a very special meal is customary in such situations and, in many cases, also a question of great pride. This was most certainly the view my hosts had of the dinner to which I had been invited.

This meant two things. Firstly that it would have been considered rude to decline the food offered to me. It would make me appear as an ignorant and I would make my hosts "lose face", which is essentially the same thing as dishonoring them in public. Secondly, as a natural consequence of what I have just mentioned, refusing the plate of dark red meat they offered me would effectively be the same as turning down not only the deal we were there to sign on but also all possible future commercial ventures with my would-be business partners. I was in dire straits - or so, at least, I thought - as the CEO of the firm looked at me with a gaze of judgement and expectation and certified what I very much still doubted, namely that this was "hao chi", good food.

I have never feared what others consider taboo and traveling is in my blood. I don't frown on challenges, I embrace them. So I grabbed the miniscule piece of blubbery meat with my chopsticks, delicately placed it in my mouth and suddenly felt as if I had stepped through a door or as if a curtain had been lifted in front of my eyes.

This was my first encounter with the meat of dolphin - also referred to as the "pig of the sea" in some parts of the world - and I have had many, many more since. Dolphin is a nutritious meat with a strong yet rounded taste. As opposed to shark or giant salamander, it is smooth on the palate and will not give you gas. My only regret is not trying it sooner.

That is why I have decided to write this short introduction to the dolphin cuisine. I have chosen six dishes I believe belong to the most important and easiest to love for beginners. I like them all except from the pulled porpoise - I prefer "true" dolphin meat but, with their numbers shrinking, it can sometimes be hard to come by, hence making porpoise the closest alternative.

I remain hopeful that action will be taken to save these endangered species, ideally through industrial breeding and farming programs, in order for the future generations to know the delights of this underestimated delicacy.

Until we meet in the harbor,

Antonio Proano

Dolphin Stroganoff with rice

Dolphins are rarely spotted in the cold and increasingly polluted waters of the Baltic sea. Naturally, when two deceased specimens washed ashore in Southern Sweden in the early 1950's, the local inhabitants could hardly contain their enthusiasm. Building on a local recipe for sausage (which was in turn inspired by a Russian beef recipe), the crafty Swedes immediately set to work and created what would be known as the original plate of Dolphin Stroganoff. The recipe has been improved over the years and most experts today agree that the use of spinner dolphin is the superior choice for the concoction of this innovative yet traditional dish.

Ingredients:

*4 portions of rice
400 g spinner dolphin in strips
2 finely chopped yellow onions
2 dl cooking cream
1 dl water
1 tbsp tomato purée
1 tbsp Chinese soy sauce
1 tbsp cooking oil for frying*

Preparation

Cut the meat into strips. Spinner dolphin meat is known for its rather elastic texture - possibly a result of the abundant spinning which the animal engages in and which has given it its name - and will give a festive, curly appearance to the strips of meat.

Cook the rice according to the instructions on the packaging.

Fry the meat strips in a pot for about 5 minutes. Add onion and fry for another minute.

Add cooking cream, water, tomato purée and soy sauce. Let boil for approximately 10 minutes.

Taste and add salt and pepper.

Serve with rice on the side.

Deep-fried sticky dolphin croquettes

Because the presence of meat is not apparent until you have taken a bite (and are hooked forever), this is a popular dish in the still unenlightened corners of the world where dolphin consumption is somewhat frowned upon. This also makes it a good introduction to the dolphin cuisine as well as a convenient snack when travelling. Common dolphin may be used instead of dusky dolphin should your local fisherman be out of stock.

Ingredients (30 tapas):

*500 g dusky dolphin meat
1 yellow onion
1 bunch parsley, leaves finely chopped, stalks reserved
1 garlic head
1/3 cup wine vinegar
2 tablespoons tiny capers in salt, rinsed and drained
1/2 white onion, very finely chopped
1 teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
Safflower oil, for deep-frying
Seasoned all-purpose flour, to coat
2 eggs, lightly beaten
4 cups of breadcrumbs*

Preparation

Place the slices of dolphin meat in a large pot with the yellow onion, parsley stalks, garlic and vinegar. Cover with 8 quarts water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 3 hours. Drain the meat, reserving the garlic. Once cool enough, finely chop the skin, fat and meat and place in a large bowl. Add the garlic, chopped parsley, capers, white onion, salt and pepper. Dusky dolphin is commonly said to require a heavier touch of seasoning than other marine mammals, do not hesitate to use an ample dose of pepper and, according to your preference, garlic.

Form the meat mixture into a sausage, placing it on a piece of plastic wrap which is then rolled up to form a log. Work the log until you have a sausage approximately 3 cm in diameter. Place the roll in the refrigerator overnight.

Unwrap the roll, cut it into slices. Fill a saucepan one-third full of oil and heat it up until a cube of bread dropped into the oil browns in 15 seconds. Dust the slices in flour, then dip in the beaten eggs. Roll in the breadcrumbs then deep-fry for 2 minutes. Drain on a paper towel, serve hot.

Minced dolphin pizza

In the Venn diagram's cross section between the concepts "excellence" and "snack", we find the minced dolphin pizza. Although it's easy enough to prepare, the qualities of this pizza make it a far cry from the fast food its name would have it mistaken for. This succulent circle of savory slices is versatile enough to function as an everyday meal as well as a classy canapé for the finest of cocktail parties.

Ingredients:

*25 g yeast
3 dl tepid water
6 dl flour
1 tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
1 tbsp sunflower oil*

*400 g minced dolphin
5 tbsp tomato purée
1 tsp salt
1 tbsp sugar
2 finely cut yellow onions
2 tsp chili powder
1 bunch parsley, leaves finely chopped*

Preparation

Mix the yeast with the water. Add flour, sugar and sunflower oil and stir.

Let rise with a piece of cloth to cover for 45 minutes. Set the oven to 250 degrees. Mix everything left, except the parsley, into a paste.

Divide the dough into 6 fish-shaped pieces and roll them thin. Grease a baking tray with some oil and put the pieces of dough on it. Put a handful of the meat paste in a thin, even layer on each piece. Bake in the oven for about 8 minutes. Once the pizza is ready, sprinkle the parsley on top. Serve with seasonal vegetables and raki.

Dolphin soup

A traditional, rustic fisherman's soup from Southern Europe that will satiate hardworking proletarians and CEO's alike. The use of common dolphin meat in the preparation of this dish is of course traditional and linked to the animal's prevalence in the Mediterranean basin but it is also fitting given the seemingly mundane nature of the dish. But make no mistake, there is nothing common about the extraordinary sensations this modest soup will bring to your taste buds.

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 carrot
- 1 onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp saffron
- 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 fish bouillon cube
- 2 ½ dl dry white wine
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 tomatoes
- 1 ½ dl cooking cream
- 600 g common dolphin filet
- 8 mussels
- 8 scampi

Preparation

Heat the oil in a pan, fry the onion, thyme, saffron and cayenne pepper for a few minutes. Add the fish bouillon, white wine, tomato purée, tomatoes (chopped) and cream. Stir thoroughly.

Let the soup boil then simmer with no lid for about 10 minutes. Shred the dolphin meat into thin pieces then add it to the soup along with the scampi and mussels. Let the soup cook for 5 minutes, the dolphin meat enjoys a resolute but relatively short dip in the broth to reach its full potential. Serve with roasted baguette.

Pulled Porpoise

Treat your friends to this tasty stew and the party will be an assured success! For the señores, this gastronomical experience is also an effective tool to woo your lady after a conjugal bout or disagreement. Whatever you stand accused of, this delicious dish will set the mood for forgiveness and convince her that, whatever you did wrong, you did not do it on "porpoise".

Ingredients:

*1½ kg porpoise meat
3 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
2 yellow onions
1 garlic head
Hickory sauce*

Preparation

Set the oven to 125 degrees.

Season the meat thoroughly with salt and pepper. Put it in a pot with a lid.

Peel and cut the onion into cloves. Peel the garlic. Put onion and garlic around the meat in the pot. Add enough hickory sauce to cover the meat.

Put on the lid and place the pot in the oven for 4-5 hours, until the meat is very tender. The porpoise meat gets a healthy glow when it's allowed to bask in the head of the oven.

Using a fork, pull the meat apart and mix it with the sauce.

Serve with bread, corn, tomato salsa and creme fraiche.

Minced dolphin in pita bread

The children's favorite! Also popular among adults and the elderly. What else is there to say?

Ingredients (6 tapas):

*6 pieces of pita bread
1 red onion
2 tomatoes
2 avocado
1 garlic clove
150 g feta cheese
500 g minced dolphin meat
1 tbsp olive oil
2 tsp paprika powder
1 meat bouillon cube
1 dl water
1 tbsp oregano*

Preparation

Set the oven to 200° C.

Peel and slice the red onion. Cut the tomatoes into squares.

Split, seed and squash the avocado with a fork. Peel and grate the garlic then mix it in. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed.

Crumb the feta cheese into sturdy morsels.

Heat the pita bread in the oven for 2-3 minutes.

Fry the minced dolphin in the oil and add the paprika powder. Crumb the bouillon, add the water and wait until hot.

Season with salt, pepper and oregano.

Split the pita breads and fill with the minced meat, avocado mash, onion, tomatoes and feta cheese.