

Wood-Grilled Swordfish, Sicilian Style

In the bio section on my blog site I said, “Cooking, fine dining, and eating well were not new to me.

From an early age good food has always been part of my life. Those early culinary experiences shaped my thinking and, as such, over time, influenced the journey I took to arrive here today.”

That has not changed, although my interests in what foods I enjoy cooking and eating have become more focused while my skills and knowledge have improved in the kitchen over the past 50 years.

It should come as no surprise that having been raised in an Italian-American household with an extended family network, that my favorite culinary leanings are Italian.

Seafood and vegetables of all kinds top my list of favorites, although pasta is never too far away! That is essentially what I enjoy cooking today.

My heritage is southern Italian, with my roots solidly planted in Sicily, where both seafood and vegetables are fundamental to the cuisine and daily diet.

Swordfish and tuna are the mainstay catch from the waters surrounding the large island, and to a lesser extent, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, as well as other ocean inhabitants that you typically find in the Sicilian seafood markets on a daily basis.

With this post I want to share a colorful and flavorful approach I recently discovered to preparing swordfish cooked over a wood fire. The flavors of the vibrant condiment that accompany the grilled swordfish reflect Sicily’s culinary influences over centuries from Arabia, Greece, Spain, and others.

Capers, raisins, olives, pine nuts, and the essential tomatoes, which are at their peak of flavor in this Summer season, make up the basis of the accompaniment which I refer to as a Sicilian-Style Relish.

“ The flavors of the vibrant condiment that accompany the grilled swordfish reflect Sicily’s culinary influences . . . ”

First, a little background.

Back in 2020, I published a post titled *Short Order #8*, that was all about a sauce often used in Sicily as well as other southern Italian Provinces that focus on seafood cookery.

The sauce is Salmoriglio, which is essentially olive oil, lemon juice and sometimes the zest, garlic, oregano (fresh or dried), along with salt and pepper. Simple, straightforward, and couldn't be easier to prepare.

I first discovered this condiment 18 years ago while reading an article titled "Marcella's Favorite Seafood Recipe" in *Food & Wine* magazine. Marcella is, of course, the late Marcella Hazan, who needs no further introduction.

The article was an eye-opener for me and I have been enjoying the sauce ever since.

However, with the recipe in this post I use the sauce as a marinade for the swordfish before grilling and as a baste while grilling. The finished dish is plated with the Sicilian-Style Relish mentioned earlier.

Here is how I prepared this recipe.

Wood-Grilled Swordfish, Sicilian-Style

Swordfish

4 swordfish filets approximately 6 oz each and 1 to 1-1/4 inch thick

Salmoriglio

Essentially a mixture of olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. My exact recipe and ingredients can be found here: [Short Order #8](#).

Sicilian-Style Relish

Ingredients

3 medium field tomatoes, seeded and chopped

1/4 cup lightly toasted pine nuts

1/4 cup golden raisins, bloomed in warm water for 10 minutes

2 generous tablespoons capers, rinsed and rough chopped

1 medium shallot, finely chopped

1 stalk of celery, finely chopped

1/3 cup mixed green and black olives (many options your choice), pitted

1 tablespoon each of chopped fresh parsley, mint, oregano (or marjoram)

2 generous tablespoons red wine vinegar

1/3 cup olive oil

Salt, pepper, and red chili flakes to your taste



Relish mise en place

Method

Rinse and dry the swordfish filets. Season both sides with salt and pepper, and using the tines of a fork, gently perforate the surface of the fish. This will allow the marinade to more deeply penetrate, the flesh and promote more flavor as well as preventing the filets from getting too dry while on the hot grill.



Swordfish marinating

Whisk together a small bowl of the Salmoriglio as described in the post Short Order #8. Spoon some of the prepared sauce over each side of the swordfish filets and allow them to marinate at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Prepare the relish while the fish filets are marinating. Assemble all the ingredients as described above and place the first seven ingredients in a glass or stainless work bowl.

Drizzle with the olive oil and vinegar, sprinkle with the chopped herbs, and season to your taste. Gently fold all the ingredients together, check and adjust the seasoning to your liking, and allow the flavors of the relish to mingle while grilling the fish.



Relish

If you are using a wood-fired grill like mine or a charcoal grill, build a solid bed of hot coals because you don't want to place the filets directly on top of a high flame.

If using a gas-fired grill, heat the grill grates on a high temperature, then lower the temperature just before placing the filets on the cooking surface.

Grill the swordfish 3 to 5 minutes per side depending on their thickness. Baste the filets on each side during the cooking time using the remaining Salmoriglio sauce.

The filets should have an even char, perhaps some grill markings depending on your grill surface, and should be just cooked through. The finish should be opaque and moist in the center.



Grilled filets

To plate the dish, spoon a generous amount of the relish on a plate, place a grilled filet on top of the relish, with some additional relish alongside or over the top. If you like, you can drizzle a little olive oil over the top and sprinkle with some coarse sea salt, a little lemon zest, or both.



Plated

A nice accompaniment to this dish would be an arugula salad, or a shaved fennel and orange salad, perhaps some sweet corn cooked alongside the fish on the grill, grilled fingerling potatoes, or just some grilled bread to sop up the sauce and the relish . . . but I'll leave all that for you to decide. And, by all means, don't forget your favorite beverage of choice!

This is a recipe you want to have on hand for cooking during the Summer season when all the ingredients included here are at their best. The flavorful smokiness of the grilled fish punctuated by the relish touches on all the flavors of classic Mediterranean cooking, especially Sicilian: sweet, salty, acidic, and fresh herbal.

I'm hopeful you'll give this approach a try. If you can't source fresh swordfish, then tuna, grouper, or halibut would all benefit from being prepared in this manner.

Do enjoy!

Eat well • Drink well • Be well

Some dishes are presented as a reason to introduce what follows. Flavors in harmony . . . Each bite should make you want to take the next!