

# How do I cook fish – different cooking methods?

## What's the best way to cook fish?

The Cardinal Rule is don't overcook it – overcooking spoils the flavour and texture of fish. Fish is cooked as soon as it loses its translucent appearance and turns opaque (generally white) all the way through. To test, insert a fork into the thickest part of the flesh and gently divide it, it's cooked if it flakes easily. Fish such as Tuna are usually served rare.

## How do I pan-fry fish?

Cook only a few pieces at a time, so as not to overcrowd the pan. Remove when cooked and keep warm while you cook the remainder. Cook in a large heavy-based frying pan in a small amount of hot butter and oil combined (or in ghee, clarified butter). Cook for 3-5 minutes (depending upon thickness) on each side, turning once only, until fish is golden and flesh flakes when tested. Small whole fish, fillets or cutlets can be coated in flour or a mixture of flour and cornmeal or breadcrumbs to give a crisp finish.

## How do I grill fish?

Fillets, cutlets, and whole fish should only be turned once during grilling. Score a thick whole fish, or thick fillets, with 2-3 diagonal cuts across the body on both sides for even cooking. Brush the skin or flesh with oil, melted butter and/or lemon juice or white wine to prevent it drying out. Place fish under a preheated grill and cook under moderate heat, allowing 2-3 minutes for thin fillets and 4-5 minutes for thicker pieces, or until flesh flakes when tested with a fork.

## How do I poach fish?

This entails placing the fish in just enough liquid to cover it and gently heating, just below boiling point, until the fish is tender. Whole fish, fillets or cutlets can be poached in water and/or wine, court bouillon, milk or beer. If the fish is to be served cold, it may be left to cool in the poaching liquid to retain moisture and flavour.

## How do I bake fish?

Most whole fish, fillets or cutlets can be baked in a preheated 180-200°C oven, unless the recipe specifies a different temperature. Whole fish can be stuffed before baking. Put fish in an ovenproof dish or casserole, with seasoning (salt, pepper, herbs, spices) and liquid (water, stock, court bouillon, wine, milk, tomato juice), covered or uncovered, and bake until tender. Alternatively, wrap fish (especially fillets, cutlets and steaks) and seasonings in lightly greased aluminium foil or baking paper.

## How do I steam fish?

Half fill a wok or saucepan and bring to the boil, reduce heat a little, but keep the water at a gentle rolling boil. Season fish with salt and pepper, place in a steamer basket and place steamer over boiling water. Cover securely so no steam escapes and cook until flesh flakes when tested. Steam whole fish for 10-20 minutes per 500g depending on thickness of fish. If steaming more than one fish at a time, ensure they are similar in size and calculate the cooking time according to the size of the individual fish (rather than total weight).