



## Snapper Baked in Salt Crust

Fish baked in salt crust is a wonderful dish for entertaining – it's easy to prepare as most of the work is done ahead of time and it's so impressive when unveiled at the table. Janni Kyritsis taught me all about baking in salt crust when we wrote his cookbook *Wild Weed Pie*, and I love serving snapper baked in salt crust with Janni's barley pilaf (see video below), another easy do ahead dish. A simple beurre noisette flavoured with thyme is the perfect accompaniment, to add a touch of richness to this simple fish. If you leave the scales on the fish, the skin will stick to the crust and lift away when you remove it. Even though the skin is likely to be too salty for most people to eat, I like to leave it on for presentation so use a fish that has been scaled. 1. To serve, scrape back the skin and use a fork and spoon to lift portions of the flesh onto plates; when you've finished the first side, lift the skeleton and head up and put it to one side, revealing the flesh on the other side of the fish. This way you should encounter very few bones.

**Serves 2**

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 x 750g snapper, gilled, gutted and scaled
- 8 sprigs thyme
- ½ lemon
- Freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 60g butter

### Salt Crust

- 500g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 500g fine salt
- 350ml water



### METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 225°C.
2. Make Salt Crust: combine flour and salt, mix in water and knead for a minute or 2, until it forms a firm dough that's no longer sticky. Cover with plastic wrap pressed onto the surface and set aside until needed.
3. On a lightly floured work surface, roll dough into a suitable shape to encase the fish.
4. Wipe out the cavity of the fish well with paper towel to remove any remaining offal or blood and pat the skin dry.
5. Remove most of the thyme leaves from the sprigs and set aside.
6. Cut off a slice of lemon and squeeze it into the belly cavity, place it into the cavity with the stems of the thyme and a good grind of pepper.
7. Place the fish in the centre of the dough.
8. Wrap the dough around it, smoothing and pinching it together as you go to completely enclose it. You may need to reinforce the tail section as the sharp fins can pierce the dough.
9. Place on a baking paper-lined baking tray and bake for 30 minutes.
10. Remove fish from the oven and set aside to rest for 5 minutes.
11. Meanwhile, place butter in a small saucepan over medium heat and cook for a few minutes, until it turns nut brown. Add a squeeze of lemon juice, the thyme leaves and a good grind of pepper and set aside to keep warm.
12. Using a serrated knife, very carefully cut around the centre of the pastry, taking care not to cut in too far or you will cut the fish. Remove the top half of the salt dough.
13. Place fish in the bottom half of the dough on a platter with the butter sauce on the side.