



Three Flavors Catfish



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Scott and Fawn Soulinthavong

At Fawn's Asian Cuisine in Des Moines, spouses Fawn and Scott Soulinthavong serve dishes reflective of their diverse family heritage. Outgoing Fawn knows customers by name and augments their fresh cuisine with herbs and local produce, even using exotic herbs grown at home. Nuoc mam, or fish sauce, is vital to make three flavor sauce and adds a rich depth of flavor. Visit an Asian grocery to buy a bottle.

Use deceptively simple techniques to create complex tastes and textures.

HEALTHY, COLORFUL AND SAVORY, BATHE YOUR NEXT CATCH IN THESE DISTINCT FLAVORS.

Freshwater fish plays an important role in Asian cuisine and restaurant owner Fawn Soulinthavong has many unique methods to prepare fish and gladly offers advice to her patrons. From a summer fish salad to a light meal of fish spring rolls or grilled stuffed fish, Fawn has versatile sauces to fit whatever is biting for anglers.

Any fish substitutes well in these dishes for crisp fried whole catfish. The fish can also be grilled or broiled.

"The sauces are easy to make. They can be made ahead and taken along on camping trips," says Fawn.

To Prepare Fish: Score with knife on both sides in a diagonal crosshatch pattern every inch. Cut halfway to bone. Heat oil to 350°F. Fry fish 10-15 minutes or until crisp, but do

not overcook. Place on paper towel to remove excess oil. Line a serving plate with shredded lettuce. Place fish on top of lettuce and add stir-fried vegetables.

Sweet, salty and sour, this dish is delicious. Serve with basmati rice or long-grain jasmine rice.

THREE FLAVOR CATFISH

- 1-2 pounds whole fish
- Vegetable oil for deep frying
- ¼ small head lettuce, shredded
- ½ cup sliced green and red peppers
- ¼ cup chopped green onion
- ¼ cup sliced white onions

Three Flavor Sauce

- ¼ cup hot water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon MSG (optional)
- 2 tablespoons Asian fish sauce (Nuoc Mam)

- ½ tablespoon fresh squeezed lime
- 1 stalk green onion chopped (optional)
- 1 tablespoon sliced cilantro
- 1 tablespoon fried, chopped onion

Dissolve sugar and MSG in water. Add remaining ingredients. Pour over fish and rice or serve on side.

CATFISH SPRING ROLLS

- 10-15 ounces catfish fillets
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ head shredded lettuce
- 1 medium carrot, shredded
- ½ cup fresh mixed mint, cilantro, basil
- 1 bag rice stick noodles (vermicelli)
- 6 round rice paper wrappers (22-25 centimeter or 10-inch size)

Bring a pot of water to boil, add



Catfish spring rolls with lime and Hoisin dipping sauces

noodles and cook for 10 minutes. Turn off heat, and with lid on, let rest for 2-3 minutes. Drain and blanch with cold water, then set aside for 15 minutes.

Lightly coat catfish on each side with cornstarch, cook in frying pan with olive oil on medium heat on both sides for 10 minutes or until lightly crisp.

Lime Dipping Sauce

- ½ cup crushed peanuts
- ¼ cup hot water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon MSG (optional)
- 1 tablespoon vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Asian fish sauce (*Nuoc mam sauce from an Asian grocery store*)
- ½ tablespoon fresh squeezed lime juice

Dissolve sugar and MSG in water, add

remaining items. Serve with rolls.

Hoisin Dipping Sauce

- ½ cup hoisin sauce
- 1 tablespoon tamarind paste
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons water

Mix until smooth and serve with rolls. Dip single sheets of rice paper into pan of lukewarm water until soft. Place on a flat surface. Place 1/3 cup noodles onto lower third of paper, an inch from edge. Add 1/3 cup lettuce and 1-2 pinches of carrot, cilantro, mint and basil leaves. Add a small, thin strip of fish. Take bottom of sheet and pull up and over half of the ingredient pile. Push the ingredients down, then fold an inch or two of the right and left sides of wrapper towards center.

Roll up, tucking tightly with fingers as you go.

TOMATO CATFISH

- 1-2 pounds whole fish
- Vegetable oil for deep frying
- ¼ small head lettuce, shredded

Tomato Catfish Sauce

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon MSG (optional)
- 2 medium fresh tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup green and red peppers, chopped
- ¼ cup sliced, white onions
- 2 cloves chopped garlic or ½ teaspoon of minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- ½ tablespoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon sesame oil
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper



Fawn washes catfish with baking soda to improve the taste. She grills cleaned and scaled whole fish quickly on each side, then wraps them in foil and removes from the heat to let them steam several minutes. The skin and bones easily peel away, leaving moist, tender fish. Her sauces are so renown, that local anglers are known to buy them by the gallon to take on fishing trips.



Tomato Catfish



Tomato Catfish

Cook fish in same manner described earlier. Any vegetables are good to stir fry, so reap summer's bonanza and use fresh local or garden-grown veggies. Heat olive oil and garlic in frying pan or wok on medium heat until garlic is golden brown. Add tomatoes and fry until soft. Add rest of ingredients but save the sesame oil and white pepper and add just before turning off heat.

GRILLED OR BAKED STUFFED FISH

Whole crappies, carp or other fish

2 stalks lemongrass

2 cloves garlic

¼ cup ginger

3 onions

½ teaspoon each salt and pepper

Tablespoon fennel

Fresh basil leaves

Another simple recipe for the campground, the ingredients can be prepared in

advance or chopped up at the picnic table. Scale fish and rinse the cavity clean. Peel off tough outer layer from lemongrass and discard. Use a food processor to chop lemongrass, garlic, ginger, onions and fennel.

Rub fish cavity with salt and pepper. Stuff the cavity with chopped items and basil leaves. Score fish on outside, making diagonal cuts every two inches. Fish can be grilled, steamed or baked. Serve with rice and the grilled fish sauce below.

Grilled Fish Sauce

2 parts soy sauce

1 part lime juice

Mix soy sauce and lime juice in a two-to-one ratio to desired quantity. Use for the stuffed fish or with summer salad recipe.

SUMMER SALAD WITH FISH

Grilled, steamed or baked freshwater fish

Shredded iceberg lettuce

Croutons

Package vermicelli noodles

These noodles puff up immensely when deep-fried in hot oil. Follow cooking directions on bag. Break fish apart into small pieces. Toss lettuce, fish, croutons, noodles and sauce together. Use either grilled fish sauce, three flavor sauce or lime dipping sauce on salad.

Fawn's Asian Cuisine

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Des Moines

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HOURS:

Open daily 11 a.m.- 9 p.m.
Domestic and import beers.