

Cooking WILD



Sporting Chef

Scott Leysath



Southwestern Crappie Cakes with Chipotle Mayonnaise

There are two things to remember when making fish cakes. First, they have to be just moist enough to hold together, but not so moist that they fall apart when cooked. Second, you can't mess with them when they're in the pan or they'll break apart. Now that we've got that straight, let's get started. Use any light white fish that will flake easily, like crappies, walleyes, perch, etc.

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/2 cup onion, finely diced
- 1/4 cup red bell pepper, finely diced
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 4 cups fish fillets, flaked and pressed dry with paper towels
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons Japanese breadcrumbs (or any breadcrumbs)
- 1/2 teaspoon Lawry's lemon pepper
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 egg whites, beaten
- oil for frying

Heat butter in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and bell

pepper and sauté for 4 to 5 minutes. Make sure that fish has been thoroughly patted dry with paper towels. In a large bowl, add cilantro, fish, pepper flakes, garlic and cooled onion/pepper from pan. Sprinkle flour, breadcrumbs and lemon pepper over while tossing, making sure to coat fish evenly. Fold in mayonnaise and egg whites. Take some of the mixture and form into a ball, about 3 inches in diameter. If it holds together, you're in business. If it's too dry and flaky, add some more breadcrumbs. It should be moist, but not soggy. Form mixture into 8 equal-sized patties.

Add enough oil to just cover the bottom of a large skillet and heat over medium heat. When oil is hot, add cakes and cook until medium brown on one side, about 5 to 6 minutes. Carefully flip over and brown other side, about 5 minutes more. When cakes are just cooked, remove from pan and top with Chipotle Mayonnaise.

Makes 8 fish cakes.

- Chipotle Mayonnaise**
- 2/3 cup prepared mayonnaise
 - Juice of one lime
 - 1 tablespoon Creole mustard
 - 1 teaspoon or more Tabasco Chipotle seasoning



Grilled and Smoked Venison Burgers

Venison burgers are typical summer fare for most of us who grill. But have you tried smoking them? If not, you're in for a treat. (My go-to smoker is the Camp Chef smoke vault.)

- 3/4 pound ground venison
- 1/4 pound ground beef
- 1 medium size onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup shredded pepper jack cheese
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 egg

Beat the egg in a large glass bowl until smooth. Add the venison, beef, salt, cheese and onion. Mix together until blended well. Place in refrigerator for 1 to 2 hours, allowing the meat to set up.

Remove from refrigerator and form into 4 evenly sized patties. Place on a greased smoker rack, and sprinkle with pepper to taste.

Smoke at 200 degrees for 20 minutes; transfer to a hot grill to finish cooking.

Serve as you would any burger, with buns, condiments, etc.

Makes 4 burgers

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Known as "The Sporting Chef," Scott Leysath has been an executive chef for more than 20 years, and is a leading expert on cooking fish and game. Author of multiple cookbooks, including "The Sporting Chef's Better Venison Cookbook," he hosts "The Sporting Chef" and "DeadMeat" TV shows on Sportsman Channel. SportingChef.com. We welcome him to the pages of MidWest Outdoors!



The Killer Griller

Vern Summerlin

Blacken Your Fish for some added Zest

After you've caught a striper or two, clean those babies with an eye on removing the red meat that runs with the lateral line to get rid of the gamey taste. Leave it be if you like the strong flavor, however, you're going to have plenty of zest with this blackening recipe.

The origin of blackening redfish began in Louisiana. This highly-seasoned recipe was responsible for the sharp decline in redfish populations. Redfish weren't considered good table fare until chef Paul Prudhomme concocted a way to use the fish that wasn't highly prized.

Today, after a couple of decades of recipes like this one, the redfish is still sought after and anglers are strictly regulated to size and numbers they can keep.

In the Midwest, we don't catch many redfish. But we certainly can catch another land-locked saltwater species—the striper. These striped bass thrive in freshwater and thrill anglers. When you're preparing your fillets, keep the redfish in mind—you want nice thick pieces of fish for grilling.

Note: The first and last time I blackened fish in a skillet in our kitchen, it nearly asphyxiated us. Blackening is an outdoor event. So with that warning, let's fire up the grill.

Grilled Blackened Striper Fillets

- 4 striper fillets
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon minced parsley
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- Dash of black pepper

Mix paprika, cayenne, salt, garlic salt, onion salt, thyme, oregano and pepper together. Sprinkle over each side of the fillets. Oil grill grate and preheat to high. In a saucepan, bring lemon juice to a boil. Remove from heat and add butter. Mix well. Grill striper fillets until done and remove from grill. Add parsley to lemon butter. Spoon one-quarter of butter mixture over each piece of fish and serve. **MWO**

Tip: Grilling Fish on Lemons

Whether you are grilling or baking fish, cooking it on lemons is the way to go. Fish tends to stick to whatever surface it is cooking on, making it difficult to keep it in one piece when taking it off. I find this especially the case when grilling, because keeping the grill bars greased isn't easy for me. But fish cooked on top of lemons works beautifully. The fillets soak up lemon flavors and come off the grate in one piece.

Did I mention cleanup? It's a breeze; you've gotta try this! Just slice the lemons and place them on the grate or baking sheet if you're are baking your fillets.

Place all the lemons close together to ensure even cooking. If you have portions or small fillets, just place two lemon slices under each piece. Cook your fish at the same temperature as usual.

Select the number and sizes of fillets you want to serve and put them on the lemon slices. Close the grill lid or toss it in the oven and cook until it flakes easily with a fork. You don't want to turn the fish, just leave it alone. When the fish is done, just toss the lemons. No messy cleanup, and no extra oil to cook with.

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