



## Sautéing Made Simple

### Six steps to the perfect pan fish

**S**OMETIMES THE SIMPLEST RECIPES can be the most challenging. Sautéed fish may seem deceptively straightforward, but it requires proper tools and technique for best results. The right materials are key: a shallow layer of fat, a nonstick or cast-iron pan, and a fish spatula. Use any fat that will stand up to high heat, like peanut or coconut oil. If you prefer butter, watch carefully so that it doesn't burn.

(Olive oil isn't the best choice for frying; save it for a finishing drizzle.) When choosing a fish, almost any thin, skinless fillet will do—local, fresh ingredients taste best. Possibly the most important step to attaining a perfectly sautéed fillet: Ensure the fish is completely dry. Moisture, like cold, will reduce heat and compromise the hard work you're doing for a perfect sear. After the fish is patted dry, dredging it in rice flour can help dry the surface even more. When the fat is shimmering—but not smoking—add the fillets with plenty of room around them, working in batches if necessary. Overcrowding the pan creates steam, and again, moisture is the enemy of crispiness. Fish fillets can be fragile; once you set them down in the pan, resist the urge to poke and prod them. (Food does not improve from being handled.) When you start to see the edges browning, flip it—and then return to restraining yourself. A fish spatula is a worthy kitchen tool investment. The thin profile can slide under the fish without too much disturbance and its extra length helps support the fish during flipping. Once the fish is done, the sauce is a breeze. The basis is a balance of fat, acid, and salt, so add whatever's on hand (olives, tomatoes, herbs) to the pan fat, and brighten with lemon or vinegar.—*Lia Grabowski*

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN BONCEK

### TLP's Sautéed Fish

**Ingredients**  
2 (4-ounce) thin, skinless fish fillets, such as flounder  
Salt and pepper

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, or an oil with a high smoke point  
½ cup rice flour

Juice of 1 lemon, plus more to taste  
*Makes 2 fillets*

1



#### DRY FILLETS

Using paper towels, thoroughly pat fish fillets dry and season with salt and pepper.

2



#### MELT BUTTER

In a large sauté pan over medium heat, melt butter or oil.

3



#### DREDGE FISH

While fat heats up, dust fillets with flour; shake off excess.

4



#### PLACE IN PAN

When the butter foams or oil begins to shimmer, place fillets in pan. Allow to cook undisturbed until edges begin to turn golden brown—about 2 to 3 minutes for thin fillets, or a minute longer if thicker.

5



#### FLIP AND WAIT

Flip fish and continue cooking for another 2 minutes. Remove fish to a paper towel-lined plate.

6



#### FINISH SAUCE

To the pan fat, add lemon juice and stir until incorporated. Adjust acidity and seasoning to taste and spoon over fish.