

Veasey & Sons Fishmongers

Barbecued Cuttlefish

About the Ingredients

Cuttlefish is one of our favourites! Appearing mostly around springtime on the south coast these fascinating cephalopods are a cheap and tasty alternative to squid which sometimes can be expensive and hard to come by.

Ingredients

- About 700g cuttlefish, flesh and tentacles, cleaned
- 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- A few grinds of black pepper
- 4 tbsp olive oil

Method

- Cut the flesh of the cuttlefish into bite-sized pieces and score with a criss-cross pattern.
- Whisk together the garlic, salt, pepper and oil and add the cuttlefish to the bowl, tossing with your hands and making sure everything is very well coated.
- Heat a barbecue (or a cast-iron griddle or heavy-based ridged pan) until very hot. Cook the cuttlefish for about a minute each side until just beginning to char - you need to cook it very quickly over a very high heat, or it will become tough. Serve immediately.

To barbecue

Preheat your barbecue in the usual way until it reaches the correct temperature. Cook turning once, bearing in mind you may have to adjust the cooking time slightly depending on how hot your barbecue is or how near the heat source the food is placed.

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Cuttlefish stew

Plain rice or a chunk of bread are what you need with this dish that's big on flavour. A green salad would also suit well.

Ingredients

- 100ml olive oil
- 1 large onion, peeled and cut into 1.5cm slices
- 1 red pepper, halved, deseeded and cut into 0.5cm slices
- Salt
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced thin
- 2 tsp caraway seeds
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground allspice
- 10 black peppercorns, gently crushed
- 1kg cuttlefish, cleaned, skinned and cut into 1.5cm strips (you'll end up with around 450g)
- 1½ tbsp tomato paste
- 200ml red wine
- 3 bay leaves
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves, chopped
- Zest of $\frac{1}{2}$ orange, grated (optional)

Method

- Put the oil in a large sauté pan for which you have a lid, and heat on a medium-high flame. Add the onion, pepper and a quarter-teaspoon of salt, and cook for five minutes. Add the garlic, caraway, allspice and peppercorns, and sauté for five more minutes, until everything is nice and soft. Add the cuttlefish, cook for another five minutes, then add the tomato paste.
- Cook for two to three minutes, stirring from time to time, then add the wine, bay leaves, sugar and thyme, cover, turn down to a low simmer and cook for an hour and a quarter, stirring occasionally, until the cuttlefish is soft. If the sauce turns very dry, add three or four tablespoons of water halfway through cooking. Add the orange zest, if using, give everything a final gentle stir, and serve

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Facts and Info

Preparing cuttlefish makes a mess like no other! The tentacles, eyes and beak need to be removed. The head is then gutted and the ink sack removed; the skin is also removed. The head, once skinned, is brilliantly white and can be thinly sliced, then pan-fried or poached. Cuttlefish tentacles, on the other hand, are tough and are best casseroled with garlic, wine, balsamic vinegar and red onion.

Cuttlefish bone is filled with gas, Cuttle-bone (the things you see in bird cages) has small chambers and like a submarine, filling or releasing the gas in them controls the cuttlefish's buoyancy.

The unique shape of the pupils plays a part in the most highly developed eyes of any animal. They allow the cuttlefish to perceive light polarization and completely reshape their eyes to focus. They also really do have the proverbial eyes in the back of the head, with a second spot on the fovea which allows them to see backwards.

Cuttlefish can make themselves completely invisible, not only do they reflect colours; they are able to merge almost completely with the seafloor.

Cuttlefish shoot jets of ink, Cuttlefish ink was the original sepia which was once used by artists - nowadays replaced mostly with synthetic sepia. The ink is used as a defence to confuse predators and allow the cuttlefish time to escape.

Cuttlefish don't have a tail, they have a fin all the way around their body instead of tail fins, like squid, and they use this fin to control movement.

Cuttlefish have jet propulsion, Cuttlefish can escape from enemies by using rocket propulsion. Water is squeezed down their body (mantle) into a special tubular muscle (siphon) that controls the direction as they are propelled backwards for a short distance

Cuttlefish have green blood, their blood is green because it uses the protein hemocyanin which has copper in it rather than haemoglobin.

Cuttlefish have 3 hearts, they have three separate hearts, one for each gill and one for the rest of the body. One reason is that their blood flows more rapidly as hemocyanin contains much less oxygen than haemoglobin.

These amazing animals (cephalopods) are so unique and beautiful. Even submarines have made use of their buoyancy methods and they have physical characteristics that no other animal has, yet most of us only know them by the piece of cuttle-bone in a bird cage.

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