

SEAFOOD *with*
Shannon Bennett
Barramundi

Prep time 1 hr, cook 35 mins (plus rendering) Serves 2

- 1 whole barramundi (around 3kg), cleaned and scaled
- 2 iceberg lettuce leaves
- Gascony butter (see crab recipe), melted, to serve
- 2 tbsp grapeseed oil
- 2 thyme sprigs
- 60 gm butter
- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying
- 6 dried lemon myrtle leaves (see note)
- ½ tsp sea salt flakes
- 1 tbsp plain flour

Chicken fat emulsion

- 2 eggs, at room temperature
- 200 ml liquid chicken fat (see note)

Potato discs

- 1 large Desiree potato
- 2 tsp oscietra caviar (optional), to serve

Butter sauce

- 60 ml (¼ cup) chicken glaze
- 20 ml (1 tbsp) apple cider vinegar
- 50 gm slightly softened butter

1 To make the chicken fat emulsion, place the eggs in a saucepan of simmering water and cook for 4 minutes. When cool enough to handle, peel the eggs, place in a blender and, with the motor running, slowly drizzle in the chicken fat to form an emulsion of mayonnaise consistency. Season with salt to taste, cover and set aside.

2 To prepare the barramundi, remove the head and reserve. Remove each collar piece (see note) from the body and ensure these are scaled. Cut the tail

section into a 10cm-long piece, then slice in half lengthways to make 2 portions. Slice two 50gm portions from the barramundi loin fillets, and reserve the remaining fillets for another use.

3 To cook the head, preheat oven to 180C, place a skewer in the mouth to keep it open, then place the head in the oven until cooked (12-15 minutes). When done, place the head on a board, cleanly cut the meat from each cheek with a small sharp knife and place each on a 8cm disc of lettuce leaf cut with a round cutter, drizzle with the Gascony butter and set aside.

4 For the tail, place a frying pan over medium-high heat, add 2 tbsp grapeseed oil and thyme, season tail pieces, and fry, turning occasionally, until crisp, golden and tender through the fleshier parts when tested with a skewer (6-8 minutes). Add 2 tbsp butter, baste and keep warm.

5 To cook the collars, crush the lemon myrtle leaves with the salt using a mortar and pestle until fine, then sift the salt to remove any larger lemon myrtle pieces. Heat the vegetable oil in a large saucepan or deep-fryer

to 180C. Coat the collars in flour and half the lemon myrtle salt and deep-fry until golden and crisp (6-8 minutes), then drain on paper towels and season well with the remaining lemon myrtle salt.

6 Heat remaining butter in a frying pan over medium heat, season the loin fillet pieces, then place in the pan and sear on each side (don't allow to colour too much), basting with butter, until done (4-5 minutes).

7 To make the potato discs, slice potato very finely using a mandolin, then cut 10 slices into 5cm discs using a circle cutter, placing in a bowl of cold water as you go. When ready to cook, place potato discs in a saucepan of simmering water and cook for 30 seconds. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Sandwich 5 discs with ¼ tsp chicken fat emulsion between each to form a stack, then repeat to make a second.

8 To make the butter sauce, heat the chicken glaze and add vinegar. Remove the pan from the heat, add the butter and stir until melted. Check the sharpness (it needs to be quite sharp). Season if required with more vinegar and salt.

9 To serve, divide the fish cuts and potato stacks between 2 plates, top each potato stack with 1 tsp caviar, then dress everything with butter sauce.

NOTES

To make liquid chicken fat, place 1kg chicken fat with a small amount of water in a saucepan over low heat for a few hours until fat has rendered out. Strain through a fine sieve. Makes around 300ml. The collars are the two triangular pieces with side fins attached left after filleting between head and body. Chicken glaze is heavily reduced homemade chicken stock, or you can use melted butter for brushing.