Parrotfish with Pickled Lemon Relish

This recipe comes from Uri Jeremias of the Israeli restaurant Uri-Buri. He uses garum, a sauce made of fermented anchovies, which dates to ancient Roman times. If you can’t find garum, chopped anchovies or Asian fish sauce can substitute, but add 1-2 teaspoons of water. There is no need to salt fish fillets before cooking because the seasoning happens in the pan.

In place of parrotfish, you can use any small, skinless fillets of white fish, such as tilapia, catfish, or sole—or a delicate pink-flesh fish such as pompano or red snapper, which should be cooked with the skin on to prevent it from falling apart in the pan. Feel free to use mint instead of cilantro, or try a combination of both.

7 tablespoons olive oil (100 ml)  
4 small fillets of fish, about 1¾ pounds total (800 grams)  
1 heaping tablespoon minced garlic  
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger  
2 teaspoons garum, fish sauce, or finely chopped anchovy fillets  
2 lemons, 1 juiced (about 3 tablespoons juice) and 1 cut into wedges for serving  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper  
½ cup finely chopped cilantro leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully lower fish into skillet, placing side by side in a single layer. Cook until golden brown, flipping with a spatula after 1 minute on each side. Transfer fish fillets to a platter. If you do not have a large skillet, cook fish in two batches; be sure to heat oil until very hot in between batches.

2. Remove any browned bits from skillet, pour off all but about 1 tablespoon oil, and return skillet to stovetop.

3. Reduce heat to medium-low, add garlic and ginger to pan, and cook until fragrant but not browned, stirring constantly, about 30 seconds. Stir in the garum and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Return fish to skillet to reheat; tip pan to collect sauce and spoon over fillets. Remove pan from heat immediately. Sprinkle with cilantro just before serving. Serve with lemon wedges.