

THE RECIPE

Fish Pie

CULTURE

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This is a typical recipe from Essex, the home region of John Rogers Herbert. The fish used in this recipe is haddock, which can be found in supermarkets all over Europe.

Haddock belongs to the Gadidae family and is distinguished from all other fish species by the presence of a black spot above the pectoral fin. It is said that these spots were caused by St Peter who, in a fit of rage, grabbed a haddock and wrapped his hands

around its neck. According to other legends, it was the devil himself who inflicted the burns on the haddock. However, what is certain is that those black spots make it unique among other fish species, so much so that they have also left their mark on its Norwegian name, *hyse*, which in the ancient language means 'burnt'.

Ingredients (serves 4)

500g fresh, skinless smoked haddock
200g fresh salmon without skin
150g shelled scallops
150g shelled prawns
250ml fish stock
30g flour
One leek cut into 1cm rounds
A small bunch of chopped parsley
5 threads of saffron
2 tablespoons of olive oil
1 knob of butter

For the mash

6 medium-sized potatoes
50g butter
1/2 a glass of lukewarm milk

You will need: a saucepan, a large flat-bottomed pan, a jug and an ovenproof dish.

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 220°C.

Prepare the mashed potatoes: boil them and mash them, mixing them with butter and milk. Set aside.

Lightly fry the leek slices in olive oil for a couple of minutes and then add the fish stock, chopped parsley and a little salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, then turn down and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the leeks from the liquid with a skimmer and place them in an oven dish.

Put the saffron threads and the fish into the liquid in the pan and cook (over a low heat) for about 3 minutes.

Drain the fish, break it up and add it to the leeks in the oven dish. Place the prawns and

scallops in the liquid and blanch for one minute. Drain them and add them to the leeks and fish in the dish.

Pour the liquid into a jug and set aside. Melt a knob of butter in the pan, sprinkle with flour and stir with a wooden spoon. Gradually add the liquid from the jug again, stirring constantly so that it thickens but does not become lumpy. Pour the preparation into the oven dish, over the fish and leeks.

Spread the mashed potatoes on top and bake for about 30 minutes (if you use a transparent baking tray you should be able to see the sauce bubbling around the fish).

A variation (depending on taste) is to sprinkle grated cheese on top 10 minutes before the end of cooking: it will form a golden, crispy crust on the fish pie.

(Liana Marabini)