

Author takes the guesswork out of cooking fish



KEELY WYGONIK

Cooking with one of Anne Willan's "Look & Cook" series cookbooks open on your kitchen counter is just like having mom around. Beautifully illustrated with step-by-step color photos of equipment, ingredients, and preparation techniques, the books take all the guesswork out of cooking.

Willan was in metro Detroit this week promoting "Fish Classics," the newest book in her "Look & Cook" series. (Dorling Kindersley, Inc. April 1993, \$19.95, hardcover). We talked by telephone in between her many stops.

"All you have to do is look and cook," said Willan. "You'll never be in doubt about what it is you are doing, why you are doing it, or how it should look."

Willan said she decided to write a book on fish because there's a lot of barriers. "There are so many different kinds, and fish is really tricky to cook. It's easy to over cook it."

Willan makes it easier. You won't find any shellfish recipes in this cookbook, but you will find recipes for broiled tuna steaks, fish stew, fish and chips, seafood lasagna and poached salmon. She shows you how to fillet a fish, and in a chapter called "Fish Know-

How," explains how to choose fish, how to store, freeze and thaw it, microwave instructions and serving size suggestions.

She uses easy to find fish like white fish, salmon, tuna and whole trout in her recipes and suggests alternatives.

"There's so much to say about fish," she said. "Everyone is looking for lightness. Chefs love to cook fish. People often order it in restaurants, but are reluctant to cook it at home. This book shows them everything from start to finish to make it easier."

Willan said her books are selling really well. In addition to the United States they're being sold in France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Scandinavia, Britain, Canada and Australia. I thought it odd that a step-by-step cookbook would be a big seller in places like France and Italy which are known for their cuisine, but Willan said people all around the world are looking for recipes that are simple, don't take a lot of time to make and use inexpensive ingredients. Her books satisfy these criteria.

Convenience foods, introduced in the 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s have helped create a generation, maybe two generations of people who need help in the kitchen, said Willan.

"There's a move back to the family and conventional values," she said. "There's security at the fire side."

In all, there will be 18 books in



Look and cook: Ann Willan takes the guesswork out of cooking in her "Look & Cook" cookbook series. These books were introduced this spring.

the "Look & Cook" series. Other titles include — "Creative Appetizers," "Italian Country Cooking," "Perfect Pasta," "Chicken Classics," "Chocolate Desserts," "Fruit Desserts," "Main Dish Vegetables," and "Meat Classics." Here's a recipe from "Fish Classics."

BROILED TUNA STEAKS WITH SALSA
4 tuna steaks, weighing ½ pound each
salt and pepper
4 medium tomatoes
2 ears of fresh corn or 1 cup

dehusted corn kernels
1 medium red bell pepper
1 medium onion
1 medium bunch of fresh coriander (cilantro)
2 limes
3-4 tablespoons vegetable oil for the marinade
2-3 sprigs of fresh thyme
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
½ lemon
To make the marinade — strip the thyme leaves from the stems, letting them fall into a shallow dish. Add oil to the fish. Squeeze the juice from the lemon half and add to the thyme and oil in the shallow dish.

Rinse the tuna steaks with cold water. Transfer to paper towels and pat dry. Season with salt and pepper. Put the tuna steaks into the marinade in the dish and turn them over, coating them well with the marinade. Cover and marinate 1-2 hours in the refrigerator, turning occasionally. While the fish is marinating, make the salsa.

Cut the cores from the tomatoes and score an "X" on the base of each. Immerse them in a pan of boiling water until the skin starts to split. Transfer at once to a bowl of cold water. When cold, peel off the skin. Cut the tomatoes crosswise in half and squeeze out the seeds. Coarsely chop each half.

Shuck the ears of corn; pull the husk down each ear to the base; trim off the husk and stem, then strip away the silky threads. Bring a large sauceman of water to a boil. Add the ears of corn to the pan, and cook them until tender, 5-7 minutes.

To test, lift 1 of the ears of corn out of the pan with tongs. The kernels should pop out easily with the point of the small knife.

Drain the corn and let it cool slightly, then cut the kernels from the cobs. If using dehusted corn kernels, drain them.

Core, seed and dice the bell pepper. Peel and chop the onion.

Strip the coriander leaves from the stems and pile the leaves on the chopping board, reserving a few for decoration. Finely chop the coriander leaves.

Put the chopped tomatoes, corn

kernels, coriander, onion and bell pepper in a bowl. Squeeze 1 of the limes and pour the juice into the salsa mixture. Add salt and pepper. Stir to combine the ingredients, then let stand 1 hour for the flavors to blend.

Heat the broiler. Brush the broiler rack with oil. Put the tuna steaks on the broiler rack and brush with the marinade. Broil the steaks with about 3 inches from the heat, 3-4 minutes. Brush with the remaining marinade and broil 2-3 minutes longer.

The tuna should be broil on the outside, but still be rare in the center. To test, flake with a knife; a translucent layer should be visible in the center.

If you like you can grill the tuna. Make an attractive crosshatch pattern on the steaks. Cook 1-2 minutes until the grill marks show, then rotate the steaks 45 degrees and continue grilling so the marks form diamonds.

Cut the second lime crosswise into thin slices. To serve — arrange the tuna steaks on a bed of salsa on a platter and decorate each with a sprig of coriander. Arrange the lime slices around the tuna.

Serves 4. Work time 25-30 minutes. Broiling time 5-7 minutes.

Keely Wygonik is Taste/Entertainment editor of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc. To leave a Voice Mail message, call 963-2105 on a touch-tone phone, or fax 691-7278.

COOKING CALENDAR

To get your classes or events listed in this column, send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Taste Editor, the Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150. Or fax 591-7279

■ CHEF JEFFREY GABRIEL
Chef Jeffrey Gabriel, director of the culinary arts department at Schoolcraft College, will teach cooking classes at the Farmington Hills Kroger's on Twelve Mile and Halsted, noon to 1:30 p.m.

and 2:30-4 p.m. Saturday, June 6: There is no charge for this class. Chef Gabriel will present a low-calorie, low-cholesterol menu of easy-to-prepare items. Complimentary coffee, menus and recipe cards will be available for class participants.

■ SCHOOLCRAFT
Join Chef Dan Hugeliter and learn the latest cooking techniques to prepare tasteful and nutritionally balanced vegetarian meals when you register for Vegetarian Cuisine, a three week course beginning 6-9 p.m. Monday, June 14. Recipes and tastings of dishes prepared in class will be shared. The fee is \$85. For information, or to register, call 462-4448.

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