

## Bar Braisé aux Aromats

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Sea bass is certainly one of the finest fish available and is particularly good accompanied by a beurre blanc sauce, as here.

This is an adaptation of a recipe from *Classic French Cooking* published by Time Life. In the original, the bass is braised whole then skinned and filleted, which makes for a somewhat difficult and messy presentation operation. This achieves a neater result with the same flavour by poaching skinned fillets. In both cases, a beurre blanc is made from the cooking liquid.

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### Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	15 mins
cooking time:	25 mins

### Ingredients

2 1½-2 lb sea bass cleaned  
4 button mushrooms, thinly sliced  
2 shallots, finely chopped  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
1 large clove garlic, chopped  
2 tbs fresh parsley  
~20 fresh rosemary needles  
4 sprigs fresh thyme  
1 bay leaf  
½ pt dry white wine  
4 oz chilled butter cubed  
2-3 tsp fresh lemon juice  
salt and pepper

### Method

Prepare the bass. Remove the fillets from both fish and skin them. (I find a flat-bladed ham knife particularly effective for the skinning operation. if you have one.) Remove as many pin bones as possible with tweezers or pliers; whatever you have available. Cover the fillets with cling film and keep them cool in the fridge.

Make the poaching stock. Put the fish frame (skip the head) and all the ingredients down to and including the white wine into a pan. Add about a pint of water to cover and bring this to a simmer. Lower the heat to gently simmer the stock for 25 minutes (no more) skimming any scum from the surface. Strain it through a fine sieve. This can be done ahead of time.

Cooking the fish. Select a pan large enough to hold the fillets in a single layer, pour in the poaching liquid and bring it back to the boil. Add the fillets; the liquid should just cover them. Let it come back up to a simmer and poach very gently until barely set. Remove the fillets and keep them warm while you make the sauce.

Making the sauce. Pour off about 10 fl oz of the poaching liquid and boil it in a wide pan to reduce by half. Whisk in the chilled butter a few pieces at a time, trying to keep the sauce just below boiling point. Now lift the sauce with the lemon juice to taste. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.

Spoon some of the sauce over the fillets and serve the rest in a sauce boat.