



PAN-FRIED RED SNAPPER

WITH SEARED WATERMELON AND MANGO COULIS

by Chef **Hance Bannister** of the *Coral Reef Club*

Chef Hance Bannister says this recipe is easy. “It’s just pan-fried snapper, seared watermelon, mango in salted lime juice and a puréed mango dressing”, says the mild-mannered chef who’s worked at the Holetown resort for more than 25 years.

Starting as a server when he was 19, Bannister worked his way up to training chef, commis, junior sous, head chef and finally executive chef, the position he’s held for the past six years. So to him, adding (optional) cheffy touches like the cucumber roll-ups, the watermelon cutouts and the lime-green parsley oil really are easy. For the rest of us, perhaps not so much.

When he came up with it, he was dreaming of something fresh, light and summery. “I like the vibrancy of it. When you eat it, it should remind you of the Caribbean”, he says.

An admirable goal, but Bannister will forgive you if you just make the pan-fried fish and mango *coulis*, skip the rest and call it lunch. Besides, if you became as excellent a chef as him, there’d be less reason to the *Coral Reef Club* to enjoy his seafood-heavy, daily changing menu. *That* would be the real shame.

Pan-fried Red Snapper with Seared Watermelon and Mango Coulis

Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

Mango Pickle

1/2 ripe mango, peeled and chopped into 3/4-inch cubes
1/2 tsp. (2 g) minced cilantro
1/4 Scotch bonnet or other finely chopped hot pepper
1/4 tsp. (1 g) coarse kosher or sea salt
Juice of half a lime

Mango Coulis

1/2 cup (125 g) diced fresh mango
1 1/2 tbsp. (22 ml) lime juice
1 tsp. (5 g) grated lime zest
Sugar to taste

Seared Watermelon

Two 1/2-inch (1 cm) thick wedges or 4-inch (10 cm) diameter circular slices of watermelon

Pan-fried Red Snapper

2 tbsp. (30 ml) olive oil
1/2 tsp. (2 g) salt
Pinch of black pepper
Two 5-oz. (140 g) red snapper fillets, skin on

4 long, thin slices of cucumber cut on a mandoline and rolled up, optional, for garnish
Microgreens, optional, for garnish



Photography: Kenneth Theissen

HANCE BANNISTER

Executive Chef – Coral Reef Club

Instructions

1. Combine all the ingredients for the mango pickle in a bowl and adjust seasoning to taste by adding more salt, chilli pepper or lime juice, as needed.
2. Set aside for at least 2 hours to marinate.
3. Combine all the ingredients for the mango *coulis*, except the sugar, in a blender or food processor. Taste and add a sprinkle of sugar if needed. Strain into a bowl or container using a sieve or cheesecloth.
4. Sear the watermelon in a non-stick pan for about 1-2 minutes on each side until slightly caramelised.
5. Rinse the fish and pat dry with paper towels.
6. Season the flesh side only with the salt and pepper.
7. Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat.
8. Place the fish in the pan skin-side down. Cook the snapper for 1 minute, or until the skin releases easily from the pan, then reduce the temperature to medium for 2 minutes more, or until the skin becomes crispy and golden (see Chef's Tips).
9. Flip the snapper carefully with a spatula and cook for 1-2 minutes more, depending on the thickness of the fish, or until the fish is cooked through.
10. Check for doneness by using a fork to peek at the centre of the fish. It should be barely flaky and opaque.
11. To serve, place a watermelon slice or wedge on each plate and top with the fish, skin-side up. Scatter the cucumber rolls, pickled mango cubes and microgreens around the fish.



MAKING IT CHEFFY

1. You can grill the watermelon to give it attractive grill marks.
2. If your watermelon isn't too wide, cut a circular slice instead of a wedge. Then, after grilling or searing, use a cookie cutter, pastry piping tip or sharp paring knife to cut a few small circles from it to decorate the plate. Fill the holes with the mango *coulis*, paper-thin rolled up cucumber slices and parsley oil made by blanching parsley leaves, blending them with oil and straining the bright green oil.
3. Or, "if you want to get really cheeky", says Bannister, use a kitchen torch to caramelize the watermelon instead of searing or grilling. "You can also sprinkle it with a tiny bit of sugar to *brûler* it if you use a torch."

CHEF'S TIPS

1. Use thick pieces of red snapper so that the fish won't cook through before the skin becomes crispy.
2. Barracuda and sea bass are good substitutes for red snapper in this recipe, says Bannister, but you can use any kind of thick, skin-on fish. At the *Coral Reef Club*, Bannister uses as much local fish as possible, from amberjack to flying fish, kingfish, mahi-mahi and grouper.
3. Use an under-ripe mango for the pickle and a very ripe mango for the *coulis*. "The riper, the better", he says.



THE SECRETS TO CRISPY SKINNED FISH

1. Salt only the fleshy side of the fish, not the skin. Salt draws out moisture, so if you salt the skin, you'll end up quasi-steaming the fish or having to cook it for longer, resulting in overcooked fish.
2. When you add fillet skin-side down to the hot oil, gently push down on the top with your fingers or a spatula so the skin doesn't wrinkle underneath and create air pockets, resulting in some crispy parts and some gelatinous parts.
3. How do you know when it's time to flip the fish? "It's a matter of touch", says Bannister. "When you put the fish skin-side down, it tends to stick to the pan, but when the skin starts to cook, it should start to move around." That should happen after about a minute or two. That's when you should reduce the heat to medium or medium-low and continue cooking and pressing down gently for another two minutes or so. Peek underneath to see if the skin is crispy enough and then flip it over to finish it off.