

Gefilte Quenelles with Braised Leeks and Lemon Zest

pareve | serves 6 as a main course, 10 to 12 as a first course

Jeff's grandmother Alice Solomon used to make gefilte fish from the fresh northern pike that Jeff's grandfather Lester would catch in the lake outside their summer cabin in Wisconsin. Alice's gefilte fish bore little resemblance to the store-bought gefilte fish dumplings typically seen at Passover, but they did resemble the light-textured fish quenelles—or fish dumplings—we have often enjoyed in France. Which is how we came up with this recipe!

Don't wait for Passover to enjoy them. They make a wonderful year-round first course or main course. Leftovers are great for lunch too. A hint of ginger, fennel, and coriander adds a subtle, exotic touch. (Horseradish is not recommended.) These quenelles can be served chilled or at room temperature.

For best results, prepare these pink-hued salmon dumplings a day in advance and let them soak, refrigerated, in their broth. They can be plated in minutes

Pair with a refreshing, chilled white wine such as Sauvignon Blanc, Roussane, Chenin Blanc, or Chardonnay. Fruity Riesling or Gewürztraminer would be good too.

- 2 pounds salmon fillets, skinned, cut into 1-to 2-inch cubes
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
- ¼ cup chopped onion, plus 1 onion, sliced
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 carrots, cut into ¼-inch-thick rounds
- 1 fennel bulb, trimmed and sliced into ¼-inch-thick crescents
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 bottle (750 ml) or 3 cups dry white wine

hours or overnight. (If the fish is not cold enough, it will not hold its shape when you mold it into balls. You can speed up the cooling process by putting the fish in the freezer. But be careful not to let it freeze.)

While the fish is chilling, in a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the sliced onion and remaining chopped garlic and sauté, stirring occasionally, until the onion is translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the carrots and stir to coat with the oil. Add the fennel and stir until it is coated as well. Continue to sauté, stirring occasionally, until the fennel is soft and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Stir in the thyme, coriander, and the remaining 1 teaspoon salt. Add the wine, water, and bay leaf. Bring the liquid to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer, uncovered, for 45 minutes.

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Place the fish, half the chopped garlic, the ginger, chopped onion, eggs, lemon juice, and 1 teaspoon of the salt in a food processor. In pulse mode, finely chop (but do not puree). Transfer the fish mixture to a large nonreactive bowl. Stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula until all the ingredients are well incorporated. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2

6 cups water

1 bay leaf

**6 to 12 leeks (white part only),
well washed (Allow 1 leek
per individual portion.)**

**2 tablespoons finely chopped
lemon zest**

Freshly ground pepper

Remove the pot from the heat and let the broth cool slightly, about 15 minutes. Strain the broth through a fine-mesh sieve and reserve the vegetables from the broth in a covered container and refrigerate. Divide the strained broth between 2 large pots or deep-sided skillets.

Roll the chilled fish mixture into 10 to 12 balls and arrange them on a flat surface covered with wax paper. (If necessary, wet your hands occasionally with cold water to prevent sticking.) Bring the broth in the pots to a boil over high heat. Use a large spoon to gently lay the quenelles into the broth, dividing them between the 2 pots so that they have room to cook without touching each other. Reduce the heat to medium and if the quenelles are not completely submerged, spoon a little broth over the tops. Cover and braise (which means simply to cook in any liquid—in this case the vegetable broth) for 15 minutes.

Turn off the heat, uncover the pots, and let the quenelles cool slightly in the broth for 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer the fish and the broth together to a large covered container and refrigerate overnight or up to 2 days.

A few hours prior to serving the fish, prepare the leeks. Fill a large deep-sided skillet or pan with about ½ inch water and bring to a boil. Lay the leeks in the pan, cover, and cook until they are tender, about 10 minutes. Remove the leeks from the liquid and let cool for 10 or 15 minutes. Cover and reserve in the refrigerator until ready to use.

To serve, halve each leek lengthwise. On individual plates, lay 2 leek halves in an “A” or “teepee” shape, touching at the top but leaving a wide space at the bottom. Set 1 quenelle in between the leeks for a first course; 2 quenelles for a main course. Place a spoonful or two of the reserved broth vegetables around the sides of the fish. Garnish the quenelles with additional juice from the fish broth, the lemon zest, and pepper to taste.

Fish Soup with Matzo Balls and Aioli

pareve | serves 6 as a first course

We love fish soup. One long-ago Passover, we suddenly wondered, “Why don’t we make matzo ball soup with fish stock instead of chicken stock?” This saffron-colored variation on a traditional theme has now become our standard.

You’ll probably want to double the ingredients for Passover (and remember to use the Passover recipe for the aioli, with lemon juice instead of mustard), but you don’t need to wait for the holiday to enjoy this lovely dish. It’s not hard to make and will provide lots of pleasure for you and your dining companions at any time of the year. (You can also enjoy it without the matzo balls.)

The list of ingredients may seem long, but most of them are simply thrown in the pot, boiled, and then strained. You will also need to purchase a 3-to 4-pound ocean fish. (Remember that kosher fish must have fins and scales.) If you are using the fish head, don’t bother removing the gills, as some cookbooks traditionally advise. Contrary to popular belief, we haven’t found they add any bitterness.

Both the matzo balls and soup are best made a day in advance—or at least the morning before you serve them. First make the matzo balls. They need to be chilled for about 3 hours prior to cooking or the mix will not harden enough to form balls. Make the fish soup when the matzo balls are chilling in the refrigerator. For ease of presentation, we have kept the recipe for the soup and the matzo balls separate.

Aioli, or garlic mayonnaise (page 244), adds richness. It is added to the broth when serving. Diners can just mix it into the liquid themselves. No more than 5 or 10 minutes are required to whip up an aioli from scratch. Make it in advance and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

From a wine-drinking perspective, the French would most likely enjoy this soup with a glass of dry rosé. (We have enjoyed countless fish soups in southern France paired with crisp, chilled local rosés. It’s a tradition.) Other fine options would include any racy, dry white wine such as Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, or Chardonnay.

soup

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 onions, sliced

3 carrots, coarsely chopped

3 celery stalks, coarsely chopped

One 3-to 4-pound saltwater fish (with or without head), such as cod, flounder, salmon, or halibut, scaled and gutted

½ teaspoon dried thyme

1 bay leaf

2 to 4 sprigs flat-leaf parsley

1 large head garlic, halved

2 tablespoons tomato paste

2½ pounds fresh tomatoes, chopped, or 1 can (28 ounces) whole Italian plum tomatoes, chopped, with juice

1 teaspoon saffron threads

¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 large potato, peeled and coarsely chopped

1 teaspoon sea salt

1½ cups Aioli (page 244), for serving

Freshly ground pepper

Make the matzo balls (see recipe on page 100) and refrigerate while you make the soup.

To make the soup, in a large saucepan or a soup pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onions, carrots, and celery and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes. Add the fish (cut in pieces, if necessary, to fit into the pot)

and cook, turning frequently, until the flesh begins to fall off the bones, about 10 minutes.

Add the thyme, bay leaf, parsley, garlic, tomato paste, tomatoes, saffron, cayenne, potato, and salt. Add enough water to cover the contents. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer, covered, until the potato is tender, about 45 minutes.

Let the soup cool for about 15 minutes. Working in batches if necessary, in a blender or food processor, coarsely pulse the fish soup. Strain the puree through a fine-mesh sieve or colander into a large bowl or pot, forcing the liquid through by pressing on the solids with the back of a large spoon or—even better—the bottom of a (pareve) coffee mug. Discard all the solids. Strain the soup one more time through a fine-mesh sieve into a large pot to remove as many remaining solids as possible.

To serve, add the cooked matzo balls to the soup that is now in a large pot and reheat over medium-high heat. When the soup starts to bubble, reduce the heat to medium, cover, and continue to heat until the matzo balls are hot throughout, about 10 minutes. Ladle the soup with one or two matzo balls per serving into individual soup bowls. You or your dinner guests can add a dollop or two of aioli to the broth in each bowl. Season with pepper to taste.

Matzo Balls | makes 10 to 15 matzo balls

4 eggs
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup water
1 cup matzo meal
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro
1 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper

In a large bowl, combine the eggs, olive oil, water, matzo meal, garlic, cilantro, and salt. Add a few grinds of pepper. Using a whisk or wooden spoon, gently mix to incorporate all the ingredients. Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or overnight.

When the matzo mix is firm to the touch, remove it from the refrigerator and shape it into 10 to 15 balls the size of Ping-Pong balls. Rinse your hands with cold water now and then to prevent sticking. Lay the matzo balls out on a flat surface coated with wax paper.

Fill a large skillet halfway with lightly salted water and bring to a boil over high heat. Use a large spoon to gently lay the matzo balls in a single layer into the water. They should not be stacked on top of each other. Cover the pan and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook until the matzo balls have expanded and are firm to the touch, 45 to 50 minutes. Use immediately or let cool and refrigerate for up to 3 days.