

Baked Stuffed Haddock with Egg Sauce
from Nancy Harmon Jenkins, 2015

NOTE: This is a very old-fashioned recipe that my mother, who grew up in Thomaston, often made for any sort of festive meal. It was always a special request when I came home for school holidays. You'll need a whole boned haddock for this. An obliging fish monger should be able to do remove the central bone leaving the fish intact, skin on, but if there are no obliging fish mongers in your neighborhood, it is also a great way to treat filleted fish. Haddock is traditional but the recipe, whether whole or filleted, will also work with cod or other white-meat fish; as fillets, almost any of our local fish will work—try the stuffing with bluefish when it's in season.

You can also play around with the stuffing. Some people like to brown bacon dice in the pan before adding onion and garlic; some people omit the garlic; some like to add a little finely diced celery or red pepper to the stuffing. Some cooks even dress it up by adding a little crabmeat or chopped cooked lobster or shrimp to the stuffing.

Note that if you're cooking a whole haddock, the weight is of the fish *before* it is boned. If you're using fish fillets, see the additional instructions after the main recipe.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

3 to 4 pounds haddock, boned
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 small yellow onion, chopped
1 small garlic clove, chopped
1 cup unseasoned bread crumbs
¼ cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Grated zest of half a lemon, preferably organic
One egg, beaten, if necessary

Set the oven on 375° F.

Line a baking dish with foil or with parchment paper and lightly brush the foil with some of the olive oil—a tablespoon should be plenty.

Rinse the fish and pat dry with paper towels, then set it in the baking dish, opened like a book. Sprinkle the lemon juice all over the insides of the fish.

Make the stuffing: Combine the remaining oil with the onion and garlic in a small skillet and sauté gently over medium-low heat until the onion is translucent. Remove from the heat and stir in 2 tablespoons of the butter until it melts, then add the breadcrumbs, parsley, thyme, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the grated zest. The stuffing should hold together. If it is still too loose, add about half the beaten egg or more, until it holds together nicely.

Pile the dressing on one side of the fish and dot the top of the dressing with a tablespoon of butter, then fold the other side over to make a package. A few strategically placed toothpicks should help hold the two sides together, or you can tie a little kitchen twine around the fish to hold it in place.

Use the final tablespoon of butter to dot the top of the fish and transfer to the preheated oven. Bake for 25 minutes or so, until the fish flakes easily.

While the fish is baking, make the white egg sauce to go with it.

When the fish is done, remove to a serving platter, discarding the toothpicks or twine, pour some of the sauce over the top and garnish with slices of hard-boiled egg and chopped parsley. Serve the rest of the sauce separately.

To make with fish fillets:

2 pounds boneless fish fillets, cut into 6 portions—or cod or flounder or other white-meat fish

Stuffing made as above

This is made in very much the same way except the fillets are laid out on the oiled parchment- or foil-lined baking dish and the oven should be preheated to 425°F.

Make the stuffing and pile it on each fillet, then flake a little butter over the top of each. Place in the preheated oven and bake about 20 minutes, or until the top is brown and crispy. Remove and serve, with the egg sauce if you wish apart.

White Egg Sauce

This is nothing more than a béchamel sauce, but made with half chicken stock and half milk so that is not quite as overwhelming as a traditional béchamel. The mustard and ground chili pepper add a little zing—necessary for modern diners.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 to 1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ cup whole milk
½ cup chicken stock
1 to 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon, more or less, ground chili pepper
2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced
¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat, then blend in the flour, using a wire whisk to get rid of any lumps. Now keep the saucepan over medium-low heat and add the milk and stock, in small amounts, stirring after each addition and not adding more until the mixture is simmering and smooth. When all the liquid has been added, continue simmering and stirring for 3 to 5 minutes to let the sauce thicken slightly, then stir in the mustard. Taste—you may not need to add salt and pepper if the stock you used is highly seasoned. Add the chili pepper, using more or less depending on how much spice you want in the final version.

To serve, spoon some of the sauce over the whole fish and arrange the boiled egg slices on top. Garnish with some of the parsley and stir the rest of the parsley into the white sauce to be served separately.

If you're using fish fillets, top each fillet with a spoonful of the white sauce and put a hard-boiled egg slice on top. Garnish with parsley, adding the remainder to the sauce and pass the sauce at table.