

fish, fennel, and saffron stew with lemon aioli

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Cut the baguette on the diagonal into 16 slices about 1 inch thick. Brush the tops of the baguette slices with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the olive oil. Arrange them, oiled side up, on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until browned, about 7 minutes. Lightly crush 1 of the garlic cloves, and then rub each crouton with the crushed clove. Set the croutons aside.

Finely grate 2 teaspoons zest from 1 of the oranges, and then squeeze $\frac{3}{4}$ cup juice from both oranges. Mince the remaining 6 garlic cloves. Cut the fish into 2-inch chunks and season lightly with salt and pepper.

In a large Dutch oven or other heavy pot with a lid, warm $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and fennel, and sauté until the vegetables are slightly softened, about 4 minutes. Add half of the minced garlic, the thyme, saffron, and orange zest and cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Raise the heat to high. Add the orange juice, vermouth, fish broth, and the tomatoes with their juices and bring to a boil. Boil, uncovered, to blend the flavors, about 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, the remaining minced garlic, the Pernod, and 2 teaspoons salt and stir to blend.

Place the fish chunks in the pot and gently push down on them with a spoon to submerge them in the liquid. Cover and cook until the fish is opaque throughout, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, top each crouton with a scant tablespoon of lemon aioli. Taste the soup and adjust the seasonings. Add the fennel fronds and stir gently to mix. Ladle the soup into 8 warmed bowls, garnish each serving with 2 of the aioli-topped croutons, and serve right away.

baguette, 1

olive oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons

garlic, 7 cloves

oranges, 2

skinless monkfish or mahi mahi fillets, 3 pounds

kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

yellow onion, 1, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice

fennel bulbs, 2, cored and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice, plus $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped fronds

fresh thyme, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons minced

saffron threads, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon, crushed

dry vermouth, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

fish broth (page 142), 5 cups

diced tomatoes, 1 can (14 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounces)

pernod, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

lemon aioli (page 144)

MAKES 8 SERVINGS