

Branzino Fish Stew

Authentic Turkish Branzino Fish Stew with vegetables and cheese. A hearty Mediterranean seafood dish perfect for winter dinners in 45 minutes.

15 min

PREP

30 min

COOK

45 min

TOTAL

4

SERVINGS

Medium

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 2 lb branzino
- 0.5 lb mushroom
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 0.5 tbsp pepper paste
- 2 onion
- 3 tomato
- 1 capia pepper
- 2 green pepper
- 5 clove garlic
- 9 oz kashari cheese
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter
- 0 chili flakes
- 0 salt
- 0 black pepper

Instructions

1 Prepare ingredients

Preheat oven to 356°F (180°C). Cut 2 lb branzino into 2-inch chunks and season with salt and pepper. Dice 2 onions, chop 3 capia peppers and 1 green pepper into strips, mince 5 cloves garlic, and slice 9 oz mushrooms.

2 **Build the base**

Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat. Add diced onions and cook for 5-6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and translucent.

3 Add chopped capia peppers and green pepper to the pot. Cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring frequently, until peppers begin to soften and release their moisture.

4 Stir in 0.5 tablespoon butter, 2 tablespoons tomato paste, and 1 tablespoon pepper paste. Cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly, until the pastes darken slightly and become fragrant.

5 Add minced garlic and cook for 30 seconds, stirring constantly, until aromatic but not browned.

6 Add sliced mushrooms and cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until they release their liquid and begin to golden brown.

7 Add diced tomatoes and season with salt, black pepper, and chili flakes to taste. Cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring gently, until tomatoes begin to break down and release their juices.

8 **Add fish and bake**

Gently nestle branzino chunks into the vegetable mixture, spooning some of the sauce over the fish. Cover with lid and cook for 3-4 minutes until fish just begins to turn opaque.

9 Transfer the entire mixture to a 9x13 inch casserole dish and sprinkle evenly with grated cheese.

10 Bake uncovered for 10-12 minutes until cheese is melted and golden brown on top and fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Tips

Use Turkish pepper paste (biber salçası) instead of tomato paste for authentic flavor – it's available online and adds a distinctive sweet-smoky depth that transforms the dish.

Cut branzino into uniform 2-inch chunks to ensure even cooking, and pat the fish completely dry before adding to prevent the stew from becoming watery.

Sauté vegetables in stages to maintain proper texture – onions first until translucent, then peppers, allowing each to soften before adding the next ingredient.

Keep the heat at medium-low throughout the stovetop cooking to prevent the bottom from burning while the flavors meld together properly.

Test fish doneness by gently pressing a piece with a fork – it should flake easily but still hold together, indicating it's perfectly cooked.

Grate cheese fresh rather than using pre-shredded for better melting and a more attractive golden top in the oven.

Let the finished stew rest for 5 minutes after removing from the oven to allow the cheese to set slightly and make serving easier.

Choose a heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven to ensure even heat distribution and prevent hot spots that could burn the vegetables.