

## Chef's Kitchen

*Each month we bring a guest chef into our Chef's Kitchen column to give us a tip that elevates their cooking (and hopefully ours). They also provide a recipe that showcases their tip. Our guest chef this month is Executive Chef Aaron Rock from The Bluff at Friday Harbor House. Friday Harbor House was built in the mid-1990s and has 23 rooms, a conference center, and The Bluff Restaurant. The inn and restaurant sit on the bluff overlooking the bay, islands and boats and are lovely places to visit and eat. The Bluff has a casual atmosphere and stays as local as possible, using ingredients like kelp, sea beans, nettles, berries and mushrooms from the San Juan Islands.*

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Prior to his role as executive chef, Aaron Rock held the position of sous chef for The Bluff since early 2011. Originally from Chicago, Rock has worked and studied all across the United States-arriving in the San Juan Islands from The Boulders Resort and Golden Door Spa in Carefree, Arizona. He has an AOS Culinary Arts degree from Scottsdale Culinary School, Le Cordon Bleu. Rock is thrilled to continue offering the excellent service and delicious island cuisine of The Bluff while exploring new ways to be creative and give each guest-whether local or tourist-a true island experience. Rock currently resides on Friday Harbor with his new wife Jodi and her daughter Lily. When not at work, he can be found hiking-often foraging to keep his menu fresh and local-and enjoying the

beautiful islands.

### **Cooking fish properly, by Executive Aaron Rock**

The tip I love to share pertains to properly cooking fish. I see fish get overcooked all the time whether it has a burnt crust because someone is trying to make it crispy, or when cooking fish with skin on, and the skin becomes soggy and unappetizing.

My tip comes from the proper pan, proper heat and, most importantly, cooking the fish only on one side and basting.

First, when picking the proper pan, it should always be blemish free, meaning no divots or bowing on any part of the pan. Blemishes will create uneven cooking. Also in choosing a pan, the best is always going to be copper or copper ring as copper distributes heat evenly. If you don't have copper, stainless steel is second best.

When it comes to heat, always use a high temp oil (canola) or my favorite, clarified butter. This way you can start your pan out hot without turning black or getting a methanol flavor on your fish. You're going to want to heat your pan till you see small amounts of smoke, then place the fish skin side down away from you so you don't splash hot oil on yourself. Press lightly on the top of the fish so it doesn't curl up on you, this will only take a few seconds. It will release and lay flat. Once this happens, reduce heat to medium low and leave it alone till you start to see the sides turn pale.

Tilt the pan, and with a spoon, baste the top of the fish without touching it. Do this for a minute or two. Depending on the thickness of the fish you can repeat the basting until the fish has a semi-firm touch to it.

Turn heat off, flip the fish away from you, and there you go-crispy juicy fish.

*[Click here to see Chef Rock's recipe](#)*

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