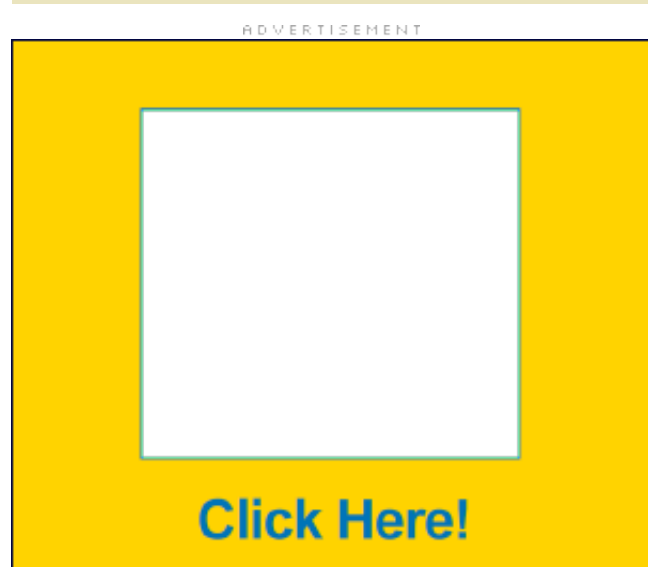


Chef's Corner: John Huggins

JOHN HUGGINS • SPECIAL TO THE NEWS JOURNAL • MAY 6, 2009

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At The Fish House, one of our core values as a company is supporting our local businesses. We procure a portion of our products from Maria's Seafood, Renfroe Pecan Company and Tomato Joe, to name a few.



As a resident of Gulf Breeze, I often show my patronage to Toro Bravo Mexican restaurant. On occasion I will grab some to-go lunch for the drive into work. I have come to know Melina, the manager, through small talk while placing my order. After sharing mutual appreciation for each other's establishment, I wanted to pay homage to my favorite Mexican spot by developing a Mexican dish with a Fish House twist.

Pan-Seared Tuna Steak Cooked In A Red Chili And Almond Sauce With Poblano And Corn Tamales And Honey-Lime Cream

4 tuna steaks

1/3 cup queso fresca for garnish

1 to 2 ripe avocados, sliced

Lime for garnish

4 tablespoons olive oil

For Salsa De Chile Ancho Y Almendra (Red Chili And Almond Sauce)

6 ancho chilies

1 cup hot water

1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

1/4 teaspoon oregano

1/4 teaspoon sugar

1 medium onion, chopped

3/4 cup toasted almonds

Kosher salt

4 tablespoons canola oil

2 cups chicken broth

Remove stems and seeds from chilies. Tear into pieces and cover with the hot water. Add cinnamon, ground cloves, oregano and sugar. Steep chilies and spices for about an hour. Pour mixture into a blender with onion and almonds. Purée until thoroughly blended. The mixture will be thick. Heat oil in a sauté pan and sauté chili mixture for about 5 minutes. Add chicken broth. Simmer 7 to 8 minutes to allow flavors to develop. Taste sauce and season with salt to taste. (For a smoother texture, you can again purée mixture in the blender.) Set aside.

For Redneck Tamales

2 poblano peppers, roasted, peeled, seeded and diced

2 cups cheese grits

1 1/2 cups corn

8 cornhusks

Combine first three ingredients, set aside.

Hold 8 cornhusks under hot water with a weight, such as a plate, and soak for about 1 hour. (You can do this at the same time that you're soaking the ancho chilies.) Spoon some of the grits mixture into each cornhusk; fold and tie both ends. Set aside.

For The Honey-Lime Cream

8 ounces sour cream

2 tablespoons lime juice

3 tablespoons honey

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

Mix together, set aside.

Steam tamales for about 25 minutes. During the last 5 minutes, start the tuna. Add olive oil to a sauté pan over medium to medium-high heat. Season tuna steaks with salt and pepper. Sear steaks for about 1 minute, or until you have a nice brown color on one side. Reduce heat and add chili sauce. Turn tuna over and baste until you reach your desired temperature. I suggest no more than medium.

Place each tuna steak on a plate with the red chili sauce. Open the tamales to display the filling and arrange on each plate. Top tamales with queso fresco. Drizzle plate with honey-lime cream, and garnish with slices of avocado and lime. Serves 4.

The Fish House, 600 S. Barracks St., Pensacola. 470-0003, or visit [www.goodgrits.com](#).



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Pan-seared tuna steak cooked in a red chili and almond sauce with poblano and corn tamales and honey-lime cream. (Gary McCracken/gmccracken@pnj.com)

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