



# CUISINE

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**D8**

## A fish story

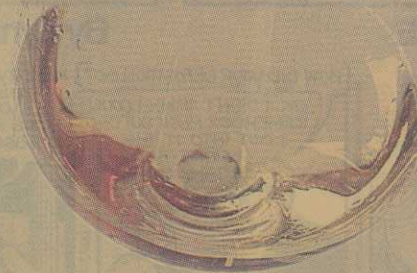
### Local chef turns Everyman experience into culinary expertise

**By Pam Mellskog***The Daily Times-Call*

**A** OULDER — Don't be fooled by his high-collared, long-sleeved white chef's jacket.

Daniel Cofrades, chef and co-owner of Trattoria on Pearl — a neighborhood Italian café he opened last year in Boulder with Sara and Guillermo Casarrubias — worked shirtless in shorts for 14 months on a commercial fishing rig off the coast of Brazil in the late 1990s.

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#### Herb-Crusted True Cod

##### Ingredients

4 6-ounce true cod fillets, skinned  
Vegetable oil for pan  
1½ cups fresh bread crumbs  
Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon  
4 tablespoons flat-leaf parsley, chopped  
2 tablespoons fresh chives, chopped  
2 tablespoons mayonnaise  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
Sea salt  
Freshly ground black pepper

##### Directions

Heat oven to 425 degrees and lightly grease a shallow baking dish. Lay the cod in the dish. In a small bowl, com-



1990s.

The Everyman experience seems an unlikely one for the son of a financial adviser and an attorney, a Spanish native who spent his teen years in Paris. There, at age 15, he got his first kitchen job baking cookies at the French bistro he and his father frequented. He later studied at L'enotie de Orleans in France.

But that stint made the difference in how he understands fish and seafood.

Those days on the rig began at 3 a.m., ended at 7 p.m. and in between took him 20 to 25 nautical miles out to sea in search of grouper, tuna and mackerel.

On board, the dozen-man crew took turns cooking a portion of the catch and washing the dishes. But they wised up fast to Cofrades' culinary skills. They asked him to slack on pulling up nets to cook for them full-time — something he resisted to get the breather he needed before heading back into European kitchens, including the Michelin three-star Michel Rostang in Paris.

He took a moment away from his restaurant business recently to share more about this passion for fish.

"It's not magic recipes," Cofrades, 30, said. "The biggest thing is you have to have the touch."

Literally.

"Touch it. Don't be afraid," he said. "You have to put your hands in the fish. If it smells like fish, that's not a good thing. It has to smell like the ocean."

Every morning Cofrades receives fresh fish from ports hundreds and thousands of miles away, something consumers can enjoy via upscale restaurants, Web sites such as [www.fromthedocks.com](http://www.fromthedocks.com) or select retail locations.

"People think Denver is a cow town, and they think you can't find fresh fish," Cofrades said. "But the American palette is changing and stores are bringing in more fresh fish, more fresh everything."

At meat counters, he said, family cooks should ask these questions: "Where did it come from? How long ago? How would you cook it?"

To spare fresh fish from becoming hard or chewy due to overcooking, Cofrades goes by his instincts. Those without enough experience to follow suit can visit [fromthedocks.com](http://fromthedocks.com) for



Directions: 1/2 cup garlic, black pepper

Heat oven to 425 degrees and lightly grease a shallow baking dish. Lay the cod in the dish. In a small bowl, combine the bread crumbs, lemon zest and juice, and fresh herbs. In a separate small bowl, mix the mayonnaise and mustard, season with salt and pepper, then spread evenly onto the cod. Top with the bread crumbs and herb mixture and bake for 18-20 minutes or until the crust appears golden and crunchy.

### Mahi Mahi Tacos with Tropical Salsa

#### Ingredients

##### Tropical Salsa:

- 1 cup fresh pineapple, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 cup green onions, chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1/8 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/8 cup vegetable oil
- Crushed red pepper flakes
- Sea salt

#### Directions

To prepare salsa: combine all ingredients and season with crushed red pepper and sea salt to taste.

To prepare Mahi Mahi tacos: Coat each fillet with olive oil, fresh lime juice, salt and pepper (to taste), and place on a hot grill for approximately 4 minutes per side. Slice fillets into inch-thick slices. Warm flour tortillas in oven or on grill. Place fish in tortilla and serve with salsa on top.

Source: [www.fromthedocks.com](http://www.fromthedocks.com)

### Blackened Lake Trout Fillets

#### Ingredients

- 4 8-ounce trout fillets
- 1 lemon, quartered
- olive oil
- Seasoning mix:
  - 1 teaspoon salt
  - 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
  - 1 teaspoon black pepper
  - 1 teaspoon white pepper
  - 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
  - 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
  - 1/2 teaspoon thyme
  - 1/2 teaspoon oregano

#### Directions

Rub lemon wedges on both sides of the trout fillets. Spray both sides of the fish with nonstick cooking spray. Mix seasonings together on a plate, and lay



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The Web site notes that pan-frying or pan-searing make for the easiest preparation. Add oil or butter to a non-stick pan, lightly season and cook over medium heat. In general, the thinner the fillet, the higher the heat. If a thick fillet is cooked at too high of a heat, the outside will burn and the inside will remain raw.

For baked fish, figure 12 minutes per inch of thickness at 425 degrees or until the translucency in the fillet's center has almost disappeared. "Pull it out of the oven and let it rest, let it relax a few minutes," Cofrades said. Such patience allows the juices to continue flavoring the fish.

To grill, select firm-fleshed fish steaks or fillets at least a half-inch thick. Quickly sear both sides over the grill's hot spot and then move to the edges to finish cooking.

Whatever the method, practice makes perfect, Cofrades said.

"Take your time to become your own master," he said. "And experiment with your kids. They will tell you if it's right or not. They're very honest."

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**Chef Daniel Cofrades** sits in his restaurant Trattoria on Pearl, at 1430 Pearl St., Boulder. Above: Halibut with butternut squash, soft polenta caramelized with vegetables prepared by chef Cofrades decorates an elegant display.

Times-Call photos by Lewis Geyer

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- 4 8-ounce trout fillets
- 1 lemon, quartered
- olive oil
- Seasoning mix:
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon white pepper
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon thyme
- ½ teaspoon oregano

##### Directions

Rub lemon wedges on both sides of the trout fillets. Spray both sides of the fish with nonstick cooking spray. Mix seasonings together on a plate, and lay fillets in the seasoning mixture. Make sure fillets are well-coated. On an outdoor grill, heat a cast-iron griddle to high temperature for 15 minutes. Place fillets in griddle and cook 3 minutes each side.

Source: Lake Superior Fish Co.

#### Wine-Poached Walleye

##### Ingredients

- 2 pounds skinned walleye fillets cut in serving-size pieces
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup finely chopped celery and leaves
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped parsley, fresh or dried
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper

##### Directions

Combine all ingredients except fish, and simmer in covered pan for 30 minutes. Add fish fillets and bring to boil. Then reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes longer. Remove fish from pan and arrange on platter. Serve either with liquid and ingredients fish were poached with or with hot celery sauce.

Source: Lake Superior Fish Co.