



## **Fish Braised with Cherry Tomatoes & Basil (serves 4)**

*(adapted from [All About Braising](#) by Molly Stevens - highly recommend this cookbook! The original recipe calls for Monkfish – I often use Halibut, Cod, Rockfish, or any other lean, mild-tasting, firm-fleshed fish. I prefer whatever is fresh, and wild caught, on a given day. I omit the pancetta when vegetarians are dining with us. It's still a hit, and very flavorful even in Wintertime when tomatoes are not at their peak.)*

**3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**2 thick slices diced pancetta (2-3 ounces)**

**1 1/2 cup finely chopped fennel (about 1 bulb – white part only)**

**Coarse salt**

**Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes**

**1/4 cup water, plus more, as needed**

**2 pints cherry or grape tomatoes (I like to mix red and yellow, if available, and double the amount originally called for [1 pint] to make extra sauce)**

**2-3 minced garlic cloves**

**1 1/2 pounds fish fillets (see above for suggested fish)**

**Freshly ground black pepper**

**2 tablespoons shredded fresh basil**

1. Combine 1 tablespoon of the oil and the pancetta in a medium deep skillet (10-inch) or Le Creuset (my preference) and saute the pancetta over medium heat, stirring so that it browns evenly, until it has rendered much of its fat and is cooked but not too crisp, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels to drain.
2. Making the sauce/braising liquid: Return the pan to medium heat, add the fennel, and season with salt and the red pepper flakes. Stir to coat the fennel with the oil and pancetta drippings, and saute for just a minute or two, until the fennel begins to sizzle. Add 1/4 cup water and stir and scrape the bottom to dislodge and dissolve any tasty cooked-on pancetta bits. Cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and braise, stirring a few times, until the fennel is tender, about 7 minutes.

Add another tablespoon of oil to the pan, along with the tomatoes and garlic. Increase the heat to medium, and saute, uncovered, shaking and stirring frequently, until the tomatoes begin to burst, about 10 minutes. Stir often and scrape up the lovely caramelized crust that will develop on the bottom of the skillet. When about half of the tomatoes have burst, about 10 minutes, add another 2 to 3 tablespoons of water and the pancetta (if using), cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and let simmer, stirring occasionally, while you prepare the fish.

3. Trimming the fish and browning it: Trim away the membrane without cutting into the fish. Trim off any dark patches on the fish as well. Cut the fish fillet into 4 equal portions. Pat the fish fillets dry with paper towels, and season all over with salt and pepper. Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a medium nonstick skillet over medium high heat, and saute until lightly browned on both sides. (This step is not critical, in my opinion – I've been lazy and not felt like dirtying another pan, so then I added the fish directly into the pot without browning it...our secret?)
4. Braising the fish: Transfer the fillets to the tomato-fennel sauce, scraping all juices/oil from the saute skillet into the pan as well. Cover and simmer gently over low heat, until the fish is cooked through, about 8 minutes. You may have to turn the fillets to make sure they have cooked thoroughly, especially if you haven't browned them first.
5. Serving: Transfer the fish to plates, stir the basil into the sauce, taste for salt and pepper, and spoon it around the fish on each plate. I typically serve this dish atop coconut jasmine rice, or buttered noodles, and alongside garlic bread. You can also offer freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, if desired.

Tonight's wine pairing: approximately \$17 [Grey Rock Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc Reserve | Total Wine & More](#)

#### Other Favorites:

My most used Le Creuset

<https://www.crateandbarrel.com/le-creuset-signature-7.25-qt.-chambray-dutch-oven/s337356>

My favorite knife

[https://www.amazon.com/Global-71G80-Santoku-Knife-Grant/dp/B00NQVJS7G/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?keywords=global+knife&qid=1702424354&s=kitchen&sr=1-5](https://www.amazon.com/Global-71G80-Santoku-Knife-Grant/dp/B00NQVJS7G/ref=sr_1_5?keywords=global+knife&qid=1702424354&s=kitchen&sr=1-5)