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Grilled Tilapia with Spicy Lemon Pepper Rub

Serves 4

You see those thin, delicious-looking fillets glistening on the chipped ice in the fishmonger's case. Oh no, you think, too thin to grill. The day is saved, however, if you have a perforated grill rack – like a metal cookie sheet with holes punched in it. Make sure the thin fillet are not too delicate in texture like Dover sole, but more like snapper, cod, or flounder. (Moderate to firm fillets may not even need the grill rack). Simply oil the grill rack and, for double insurance, oil the fish fillets, too, and the grilling will be easy.

On a perforated grill rack, a fish fillet about 1/2 inch thick should be done in 5 minutes, about 2-1/2 minutes per side. If your fillet is thinner than 1/2 inch, do not attempt to turn it; instead simply grill it with the lid closed so both sides get done at the same time.

Very thin fish fillets are usually very delicate in flavor, too, so you can go one of two ways with the accompaniments: Provide a contrast with a spicy, lemony dry rub and finish with a little melted lemon-butter drizzle, as we do, or complement their delicacy with just a little butter and lemon juice.

Last, thin delicate fillets are also perfect for planking.

INGREDIENTS:

Spicy Lemon Pepper Rub

- 1/4 cup lemon pepper seasoning
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1-1/2 teaspoons firmly packed light or dark brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher or coarse sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1-1/4 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

- 4 tilapia fillets, about 6 ounces each
- Olive oil
- Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

METHOD:

1. Prepare a hot fire in a grill. Oil the grill grate and a perforated grill rack.
2. To make the rub, combine all the ingredients in a small jar with a tight-fitting lid. Secure the lid and shake to blend.



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Grilled Tilapia with Spicy Lemon Pepper Rub (continued)

3. Brush or spray the fillets on both sides with olive oil and sprinkle each fillet with about 1 teaspoon of the rub. (Save the rest for later use; it will keep in the cupboard for several months). Place the fish, flesh side down, on the oiled perforated grill rack and grill for 10 minutes per inch of thickness, turning once halfway through. A fish fillet is done when it begins to flake when tested with a fork in the thickest part. Remove from the grill and season with salt and pepper. Combine the melted butter and lemon juice and drizzle the lemon butter over the grilled fish. Serve hot.