



Baked Seatrout with Pesto Pine Nut Topping

Florida Seafood at Your Fingertips **LIVE!**

Difficulty: Simple

Total time: 30 min

Servings: 8

Ingredients:

- 2 lb.** white fish fillets (this recipe uses fillets from four spotted seatrout)
- 1 cup** dry toasted pine nuts (or chopped roasted cashews)
- 1 Tbsp.** minced garlic
- 3/4 cup** shredded parmesan cheese (or parmesan-romano blend)
- 1/4 cup** pesto
- olive oil or cooking spray for greasing
- salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. (optional) Pat fillets dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper.
3. Arrange fillets in a rectangular glass baking dish in a single layer.
4. Combine nuts, garlic, pesto, and cheese and stir together.
5. Spread topping generously on top of fillets, covering them entirely.
6. Place dish on top rack of oven. Cook for 10-15 minutes, until the toppings is browning on top and the liquid around the fish is bubbling.
7. Serve hot with a side salad or sauteed veggies.



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Florida Seafood at your Fingertips Species Profile:

Spotted seatrout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*) are one of Florida's most popular and widely targeted sport fish. They are actually not trout at all, but are members of the drum family. Inhabiting inshore estuarine habitats such as shallow seagrass flats, spotted seatrout (aka speckled trout) can be found throughout the southeastern United States from Texas to Virginia. They have elongated canine teeth that aid in capturing prey. Young fish feed mainly on small crustaceans like shrimp. As they age, spotted seatrout begin to feed more on other fish. In Florida, spawning season is spring to summer, and spawning occurs at night.

Where to buy:

There is only a small commercial fishery for spotted seatrout in Florida, so it is rare to find local seatrout in fish markets. However, close substitutions for spotted seatrout meat include red drum, sheepshead, tilapia, lionfish, and silver (sand) seatrout. Many of these substitutions can be purchased in grocery stores or fish markets, often with locally harvested or sustainably aquacultured options.

How to catch:

If you want to use local seatrout for this recipe, one of the best ways to do so is to catch your own! Spotted seatrout are often caught over shallow grass flats. They are aggressive feeders, and can be caught using a variety of natural or artificial bait. Spotted seatrout harvest is generally open year-round in Florida, but bag limits vary by region. Also, because seatrout are vulnerable to population declines related to impacts like habitat loss, there are sometimes temporary catch-and-release only zones. Check <https://myfwc.com/fishing/saltwater/recreational/spotted-seatrout/> for the most up-to-date information.

Sustainability:

Because of the immense popularity of this fishery, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission keeps a close eye on spotted seatrout numbers through rigorous stock assessments. Recently, anglers and scientists have noticed worrying declines in spotted seatrout numbers in certain regions of the state. This has led to management changes, such as lower bag limits, to help populations recover. Seatrout population losses in the past have been linked to seagrass habitat loss caused by algal blooms and other water quality degradation. There are several ways you can help with the sustainability of the fishery. First, take only what you plan to eat! Also, reduce unnecessary death for fish you release by learning better handling practices, as seatrout are particularly sensitive to death through poor handling (see: www.catchandrelease.org). Finally, remember to protect seagrass while boating, because these fish depend on healthy seagrass.

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