

Buttermilk Fried Fresh Anchovies

with Harissa

Thom Fox, executive chef, Acme Chophouse, San Francisco

INGREDIENTS

Anchovies

About 32 fresh anchovies (8 per person)

1 cup buttermilk

Flour for dredging

TIP

A crisp white wine is superb with this dish.

Harissa Sauce

1 red bell pepper, roasted over a flame, peeled and seeded

1 jalapeno pepper, seeded

1 clove garlic

1 teaspoon coriander, toasted in dry pan and ground very fine in clean coffee grinder

2 teaspoons caraway seeds, toasted in dry pan and ground very fine

1½ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 teaspoons white wine vinegar

Salt to taste

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PREPARATION

1. Rinse the anchovies in water and pat them dry.
2. Place anchovies in a bowl and add 1 cup buttermilk. Let sit for five minutes.
3. Remove anchovies from bowl and dredge in flour. Make sure all sides of anchovies are coated with flour.
4. Place all sauce ingredients but the oil and vinegar into a blender or food processor. Blend or process until chopped. Add the oil while the machine is running and continue blending until sauce is smooth. Add vinegar and season to taste—sauce should be a bit spicy.
5. In a large shallow pot pour oil to a depth of 2 inches and heat oil to 360 degrees. A good test for proper heat is to dip the tip of a fish into the oil and see if it begins to fizz. If it doesn't fizz, wait for the oil to heat more.
6. When oil is ready, pick up the anchovies and shake off any excess flour. Carefully drop the anchovies into the oil one by one, frying only 10 to 12 at a time.
7. The anchovies will cook quickly, in no more than half a minute. They should be crisp and firm when done. As they finish, remove them from the oil and lay them on a paper towel while you fry the rest.
8. Sprinkle all the sardines with a bit of coarse sea salt or kosher salt. Arrange them on a platter, squirt with a bit of fresh lemon and serve with the harissa sauce as a dip.

Serves 4.

