

serves 4–5 | prep 10 minutes, plus 10 minutes' soaking | cook 15–20 minutes

WHOLE DEEP-FRIED FISH WITH SOY & GINGER

6 dried Chinese mushrooms
3 tbsp rice vinegar
2 tbsp brown sugar
3 tbsp dark soy sauce
3-inch/7.5-cm piece fresh gingerroot,
finely chopped
4 scallions, sliced diagonally
2 tsp cornstarch
2 tbsp lime juice
1 sea bass, cleaned and scaled,
about 2 lb 4 oz/1 kg
4 tbsp all-purpose flour
sunflower-seed oil, for deep-frying
salt and pepper
1 radish, sliced but left whole,
to garnish

TO SERVE

shredded Napa cabbage
radish slices

Soak the dried mushrooms in hot water in a bowl for about 10 minutes, then drain well, reserving generous $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of the liquid. Cut into thin slices.

Mix the reserved mushroom liquid with the vinegar, sugar, and soy sauce. Put in a pan with the mushrooms and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and let simmer for 3–4 minutes.

Add the ginger and scallions and let simmer for 1 minute. Blend the cornstarch and lime juice together, stir into the pan, and cook, stirring constantly, for 1–2 minutes until the sauce thickens and clears. Set aside.

Season the fish to taste inside and out with salt and pepper, then dust lightly with flour, carefully shaking off any excess.

Heat 1 inch/2.5 cm of oil in a wide, heavy-bottom pan to 350–375°F/180–190°C, or until a cube of bread browns in 30 seconds. Carefully lower the fish into the oil and deep-fry on one side for 3–4 minutes until golden. Use 2 metal spatulas to turn the fish carefully and deep-fry on the other side for another 3–4 minutes until golden brown.

Remove the fish, draining off the excess oil, and put on a serving plate. Reheat the sauce until boiling, then spoon it over the fish. Serve at once, surrounded by shredded Napa cabbage and sliced radishes, garnished with a sliced whole radish.

