HOOKED ON FISH

Fresh. Simple. Sustainable.

Pearled Couscous with Seared Scallops and Melted Leeks

Food 52

1 cup Israeli pearled couscous
1½ - 2 cups low sodium chicken stock or water
3 leeks
3 tablespoons butter (divided)
4 ounces mushrooms (I used maitake but you can use button, shiitake, or oyster)
1 lemon
1 tablespoon fresh parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
Olive oil
8-10 dry sea scallops

Thoroughly wash the leeks, removing the tough outer layer and trim the bottoms and cut off the dark green leafy parts. Reserve the tops for another use. Thinly slice crosswise. Trim the mushrooms and cut into bite sized pieces. Halve the lemon and cut one half into slices and juice the other half. Wash the sea scallops and remove the side muscle, pat dry and season with pepper (and salt, if desired).

Melting leeks takes about thirty minutes, so while your leeks are cooking, you can work on preparing the other parts of the meal. In a non-stick or well-seasoned cast iron skillet, heat two tablespoons of butter and one tablespoon of olive oil. Once smoking, add the leeks and season with salt. Reduce the heat to medium low and cover. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, for thirty minutes. If, during the cooking process, you notice the pan starting to dry up, add a touch of olive oil. You know the leeks are ready when you try a bit and they melt in your mouth.

While the leeks are cooking, prepare the couscous. First, heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a high-sided pan over medium high heat. Once shimmering, add the couscous, adjusting the heat as necessary to keep the couscous from burning. Cook, stirring frequently, until the couscous is toasted and golden brown. This takes about 4-5 minutes. Add the 1½ cups of liquid (water or chicken stock) and reduce the heat to a simmer. Cook for about 10-12 minutes or until all the liquid is absorbed and the couscous is tender. If you notice the couscous is drying out, add more liquid during the cooking process. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Remove the couscous from the pan and set aside. Carefully wipe out the pan and heat two teaspoons of olive oil. Once shimmering, add the mushrooms and cook over medium heat until browning on the bottoms, about 3-5 minutes. Add the lemon juice and the parsley. Coat the mushrooms in the lemon parsley mix and then add the couscous back to the pan and mix well. Set aside and keep warm.

Once the leeks have finished cooking, remove them from the pan, draining off and discarding any excess oil, and mix into the couscous mixture. Keep warm. Wipe out the skillet and heat a tablespoon of butter and a tablespoon of olive oil. Once the butter is frothy and just short of smoking, gently add the scallops, spacing them out so they don't touch each other. Cook, without moving, for 1½ to 2 minutes. Flip and cook for an additional 1½ minutes. The scallops are cooked once they have firmed up slightly and have a golden crust on the top and bottom.

Divide the warm couscous mixture into two bowls and top with the scallops. Serve with a lemon wedge. Enjoy!