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Grilled Spot Prawns with Chermoula

June 14, 2012, 4:53 pm • Section: Food, Signature Dish

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The king and queen of prawns in our West Coast waters are known as the spot prawns. Spot prawns are the largest of the seven commercial species of shrimp found off Canada's West Coast. The reason that I refer to them as both king and queen is because for the first two years of their life they are male and then for their final two years they become female.

Since the season for spot prawns is upon us, I thought it would be interesting to share some facts and tips on this delicious B.C. shrimp.

- 1) The season for spot prawns starts early May and it goes to middle of June. That means if you would still like to get some wonderful fresh spot prawns you still have a little bit of time.
- 2) If you're looking to get some spot prawns for your next meal make sure the fish monger has them in a live tank. Separate the heads from the body as soon as possible once they are out of the water. This will ensure the prawn meat does not go mushy. You can keep fresh spot prawns in a closed container on ice for a couple of days. After that, the tail meat starts to break down and it loses its perfect texture and natural sweetness. My favorite places to purchase spot prawns are [T&T Supermarket](#) or [The Lobster Man](#) on Granville Island.

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3) You can enjoy spot prawns even in the off-season. Most spot prawns are frozen at sea for export with more than 90 per cent of these prawns shipped out of Canada. If you are cooking with frozen spot prawns, it's best to defrost them overnight in the fridge. Still, I think some things are better when cooked within their season and frozen spot prawns can lose some of their delicate flavor and firm texture.

4) Spot prawns are Ocean Wise. That means they are a well-managed fishery. These prawns are caught using traps or pots, which result in minimal bycatch and habitat damage. Their fishing is closely watched by government to ensure that stocks are not depleted. There are a limited number of licenses given out to fishermen, based on the size and number of pots per vessel.



This year at [Diva](#) I decided to sous-vied them with olive oil until they are medium-rare, then cook them to perfection on the grill. I serve them in a bowl with chermoula puree, fava beans, basil, crispy rice noodles and a broth made from the roasted heads.

The way I like to eat them at home is to brush the tails with chermoula puree and cook them on the grill. I toss the heads in tempura flour and shallow-fry them until they are crispy. I place the heads on a plate; add the grilled tails on top; then sit down on the balcony and enjoy them with glass of [Farmhand Driftwood Ale](#).

Chermoula Grilled Spot Prawns

Ingredients:

- 12 whole spot prawns
- 1 cup (250 mL) grape seed oil or vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup (60 g) tempura flour or regular bread flour
- Sea salt and lemon juice for seasoning

Method:

- First separate the heads from the bodies, then separate the tail meat from the shell.
 - Place tail meat on pre-soaked bamboo skewers.
 - Brush prawns with chermoula (see recipe below) and grill them to desire.
 - Place heads in tempura flour, shake, then dust them off.
 - Heat oil in frying pan to about 350F. Fry heads on one side until crisp, flip over and repeat.
 - Place cooked heads on paper towel and season with sea salt or lemon juice to taste.
 - To serve, place the heads in a bowl and top with the cooked tail prawns.
- * If you're feeling adventurous, try sucking the brains of the prawns. This might sound crazy, but you'll be surprised at how amazing they are.

Diva at the Met's Chermoula

Ingredients:

- 1/3 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons (10mL) mild smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon (2mL) toasted ground cumin
- 2 cloves of garlic, sliced
- 2 tablespoons parsley leaves

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- 2 tablespoons cilantro leaves
- 2 lemons (juiced)
- 2 lemons rasped or 1/2 preserved lemon, diced
- 2/3 cups (170 mL) olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups diced cooked tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons sliced ginger
- 6 whole kaffir lime leaves
- Black pepper to taste
- Pinch of cayenne

Method:

- Heat oil in frying pan to about 300F.
- Add smoked paprika, cumin, garlic and ginger. Once you smell aroma of the spices, add the rest of the ingredients except lemon juice and kaffir lime leaves.
- Wait 5 minutes, then remove pan from heat and stir in the kaffir lime leaves and lemon juice.
- Let sit for 15 minutes, then remove kaffir lime leaves and blend mixture until smooth.
- Chill mixture on ice.

Chermoula can be kept in the fridge for about two weeks.

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