

PISTACHIO-CRUSTED SALMON WITH CARAMELIZED FENNEL AND FINGERLINGS ON WHITE ASPARAGUS WITH STRAWBERRY-BALSAMIC SAUCE

CHRISTIAN COLLINS, MASTERCHEF SEASON 2
MAKES 4 SERVINGS

STRAWBERRY BALSAMIC SAUCE

- 2 cups fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons whole grain mustard

- 2 pounds fingerling potatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and black pepper
- 1 bulb fennel with leafy fronds
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Fresh lemon juice

SALMON

- 4 (6-ounce) fresh salmon fillets
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup pistachio nuts
- 1 tablespoon Strawberry Balsamic Sauce
- Fresh lemon juice

- 1 bunch (12 spears) fresh white asparagus, peeled
- Salt and black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. For strawberry-balsamic sauce, in a medium saucepan combine the strawberries, balsamic vinegar, and mustard. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Boil gently, uncovered, until mixture is slightly thick and coats the back of a metal spoon. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve; discard strawberries. Set aside.

2. In a covered Dutch oven cook the potatoes in enough boiling salted water to cover for 12 to 15 minutes or just until tender; drain and cool slightly. Slice potatoes lengthwise. In a very large skillet heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add the potatoes, in batches if necessary, and cook until golden brown, turning occasionally. Remove from the heat. Season with salt and pepper and keep warm.

3. Trim fennel, reserving the leafy fronds for garnish; cut fennel in thin slices. Place the fennel slices on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with the 1 tablespoon oil; toss to coat. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until fennel is golden brown, turning occasionally. Remove from the oven. Drizzle with a

little lemon juice and season and with salt and pepper. Keep warm.

4. For salmon, rinse the fillets and pat dry with paper towels. Season with salt and pepper. In an ovenproof large skillet heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add salmon, skin sides up, and cook for 1 minute or until golden brown. Turn salmon, skin sides down, and cook for 1 minute longer or until golden brown. Remove from the heat.

5. Place pistachio nuts in a food processor; process until finely ground. Transfer to a small bowl. Remove 1 tablespoon of the strawberry-balsamic Sauce and stir into ground nuts. Stir in enough lemon juice and/or additional sauce to moisten the nuts. Spread nut mixture on top of salmon. Transfer skillet to the oven. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes or just until salmon is opaque and starts to flake easily.

6. Just before serving, in a large skillet cook the asparagus in boiling water for 2 to 4 minutes or just until tender; drain. Season with salt and pepper.

7. To serve, fan the asparagus on plates and add the potato and fennel slices. Top with salmon. Serve with sauce and, if desired, garnish with fennel fronds.

COOKING OUTSIDE THE BOX The mystery box full of random ingredients proved to be a tough test for MasterChef contestants. When faced with a similar challenge at dinnertime, find a solution with the MasterChef Academy app for your iPad or smart phone. The app is loaded with recipes and how-to videos. Get it at MasterChef.com.

PHOTO BY GREG GAYNE/FOX/REVEILLE