

Chef's Corner: Broiled Whole Pompano and Shrimp

OCTOBER 2019

The Buttery Richness of the Pompano Springs to Life in this “Best of 2018” treasure trove of flavor and buttery flakiness!



Broiled Whole Pompano with Shrimp, Greek salad, and Old Bay Buttered Sweet Corn on the Cob.

I caught a lot of great fish in 2018, but the 2.6-pound citation Pompano I landed on the Frisco beach was by far my favorite!

The mild, succulent taste comes from the sweet sand fleas, coquina clams, calico crabs, and shrimp that make up the bulk of a Pompano's diet along the sloping beaches of the Outer Banks.

Pompano is a highly preferred eating fish. It is a medium flavored fish with flesh that holds together very well for all modes of cooking, and its shape fits pans and steamers very nicely. The flesh is white except for a darker layer right under the skin, but that dark flesh does not have a strong flavor. It has excellent fat content which only adds to its buttery flavor. This is particularly evident when cooked whole, which releases the oils into the flesh where they are contained within the skin, which is also very pleasant when broiled, grilled, or fried.

Frying, steaming, baking, and poaching whole or as fillets all work well for this richly flavored fish.

A popular New Orleans dish, called “*Pompano En Papillote*,” features Pompano wrapped in parchment paper with a white sauce of wine, shrimp, and crab meat, and then steamed. It is superb, and I plan to try it with my next Pompano!

Nutritionally, Pompano is a good source of Omega-3 Fatty Acids and at between 150-170 Calories per 3-ounce serving (88 grams), it packs a powerful dietary punch and substantial health benefits based on recommended daily allowances:

• Protein:	41%	• Vitamin B-1	50%	• Zinc	5%
• Vitamin A:	4%	• Vitamin B-2	10%	• Magnesium:	4%
• Vitamin C:	23%	• Vitamin B-3	21%	• Sodium	4%
• Vitamin D	110%	• Vitamin B-5	15%	• Iron:	3%
• Vitamin E:	1%	• Vitamin B-6	15%	• Calcium:	2%
• Selenium	74%	• Vitamin B-9	4%	• Copper	2%
• Potassium:	12%	• Vitamin B-12	44%	• Manganese	1%

Selenium is an extremely vital mineral for the human body as it increases protection from damage caused by free radicals. Consuming naturally occurring selenium has a positive impact on the immune system. A single 3-ounce serving of Pompano provides 74% of the total daily recommended selenium intake!

In addition, many Amino acids are also found in 88 grams of Pompano, including 0.233 g of Tryptophan, 0.913 g of Threonine, 0.961 g of Isoleucine, 1.694 g of Leucine, 1.914 g of Lysine and 0.617 g of Methionine.

Other ancillary health benefits of eating Pompano include:

- **Improves Metabolism** - high content of B-Vitamins assists in bodily functions to help increase metabolism
- **Lowers of Bad Cholesterol** – source of saturated fat and is also a great source of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. It's high concentration of unsaturated fat is essential to fighting HDL.
- **Promotes Strong Bones** – provides calcium and various compounds that prevent weakness and fragility of bones
- **Enhances Brain Health** - contains healthy fats that assist in improving cognitive function and lower the chances of neurodegenerative diseases
- **Promotes Growth** – provides 41% of regular protein and is a perfect source of amino acids essential for development and body growth



Author with the Pompano Used in this Recipe!

My Dad is 85 years old and still going strong. We attribute this to our Mediterranean (Greek) eating style which is rich in fish, lemon, garlic, peppers, and seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables. Pompano and other richly flavored fish are staples.

In the Old Country, statistical data and nutritional info on fish like Pompano was unknown – we just knew it was good! Now that we have some science to back up our instinctive attraction to this food source, we are ready to dive into this month's feature on how to enjoy every inch and ounce of this superb meat fish!

Ingredients:

1 large whole Pompano, cleaned, scaled, and rinsed

½-pound of shrimp, broiled with garlic and butter in the fish platter

Melted butter for basting the fish (may substitute olive oil)

Fresh lemon, halved

Spices for the Fish: Sea salt, fresh ground black pepper, granulated garlic, oregano, bay leaves, and smoked paprika

Sides:

Fresh sweet corn baked with butter and Old Bay seasoning

Broiled Flatbread

Grecian Garden Cold Plate:

- Sliced tomatoes from the garden
- Sliced cucumber from the garden
- Sliced serrano peppers
- Shaved fresh parmesan cheese
- Greek kalamata olives
- Fresh halved lemon
- Red wine vinegar
- Drizzle of Extra Virgin Olive Oil



Grecian Garden Cold Plate!

This cold plate is typically served with any Greek fish dish, and while the actual ingredients vary, the lemon, olives, red wine vinegar, and olive oil are mainstays! Other typical Grecian ingredients include spring onion, green pepper, green chilis, cilantro, Feta or Haloumi cheeses, marinated green olives with cracked coriander seeds, quartered white onion, artichoke, asparagus, and pickled vegetables (okra, carrot, celery, pearl onion, cauliflower, etc.). A hearty flatbread, artisan bread, or crusty home-baked loaf is also a mainstay on most tables along with a little Greek wine, of course! We use the bread to soak up all the flavorful juices and oils from the salad and fish platters – the Greek version of a “pre-wash!”

Directions:

Sprinkle a little salt and pepper inside the chest cavity and insert a couple of bay leaves (optional) Grease the broiling pan with butter, place the fish on the pan, and baste with butter as shown below (very simple!). Broil 8-10 minutes on high, baste, spice, return to lower rack and “broast” for another 10-15 minutes til done.



Butter-Basted and Ready for the Broiler!

Broasting is a cooking method I use where I leave the broiler on high after browning on both sides. When I've seasoned the fish after the second basting, I return the fish to lowest rack in the oven and close the door to simultaneously broil and roast the fish – hence the term “broast!” It works very well and tends to glaze the spices nicely over the skin. This method also opens-up the top rack for toasting bread and quick-broiling sides such as shrimp, corn, asparagus, zucchini, etc.

I had the flatbread, corn, and shrimp ready to go under the broiler before the final fish basting. These ingredients are placed on the top rack under the broiler and cooked while the fish is broasting in the lower rack. Turn bread and baste as desired. When nearly done, roll corn and shrimp in the butter and juices and season to taste – in this case, I used a light dusting of Old Bay seasoning.



Broiled Flatbread.



Broiled Whole Pompano & Shrimp



Broiled Sweet Corn with Old Bay

We like to squeeze fresh lemon juice over the fish to deglaze the pan and create a nice lemony sauce to drizzle over each serving. We also dunk our bread in this sauce because it so delicious, and the acid from the lemon really balances-out the oils and melds the spices.

There are many ways to serve the fish. My Dad elected to cut the fish in half and work that on his plate as shown below. Another option, which will be discussed in future recipes for whole Sheepshead and Spadefish, is to gently remove the meat from the bone and serve.

I do this for my girls and folks that are not accustomed to eating fish “bone-in.” Simply push a butter knife through the soft flesh and skin as if filleting and serve the de-boned meat from the topside until the bone is visible.



Rib-free Serving of Pompano & Shrimp!



The Old Man preparing for the feast!

With the topside meat removed, lift the skeleton off the fish, leaving behind the meat on the bottom side for serving. For large fish like this, the bones are pronounced and easily removed with no concern of encountering small pin bones.

Benefits and Tips on Cooking Whole Fish:

There are countless benefits for cooking fish whole rather than removing fillets, and the only real reason that most folks shy away from eating whole fish is a fear of encountering bones in the meat. Here are a few of the reasons we like to cook whole fish whenever we can:

- Eliminates waste by using every edible inch and ounce of meat!
- Retains all of the natural oils and juices for optimum palatability, texture, and flavor
- Leaving the head on is critical for fish like Pompano, Sheepshead, or Spadefish because many of the most nutritious and buttery oils are in the head, neck, and shoulders and released during the cooking process!
- We typically do not score the fish when cooking whole! While this may speed up the cooking process and make for a “pretty” presentation, it also can dry-out the meat and allow all the best oils and juices to cook away!
- Shrimp and other crustaceans and shellfish are wonderful accompaniments and sides, and the juices are even better when drizzled over the fish to add richness and the sweet taste so prevalent in these delicacies!
- If you elect not to turn the fish over to broil both sides, it helps to season the “down-side” so that the flavors cook-in while the topside is broiling and then broasting. I will usually broil one side, baste & season, then flip the fish while still firm to broil, baste, and season the second side, but flipping the fish is optional!

As the Patriarch and Senior Chef in the Family, my Dad is not easily impressed, but I think this picture is worth a thousand words and serves as a testimony that this meal was fit for a King! **Bon Appetite!**



That look says it all! My Dad was blown away by the quality of this classic meal!

Contributed by CHAC Angler John Germanos, aka “The Instinctive Chef”

