

For healthy, forgiving cooking, try a foil pack in the oven

By Melissa D'arabian

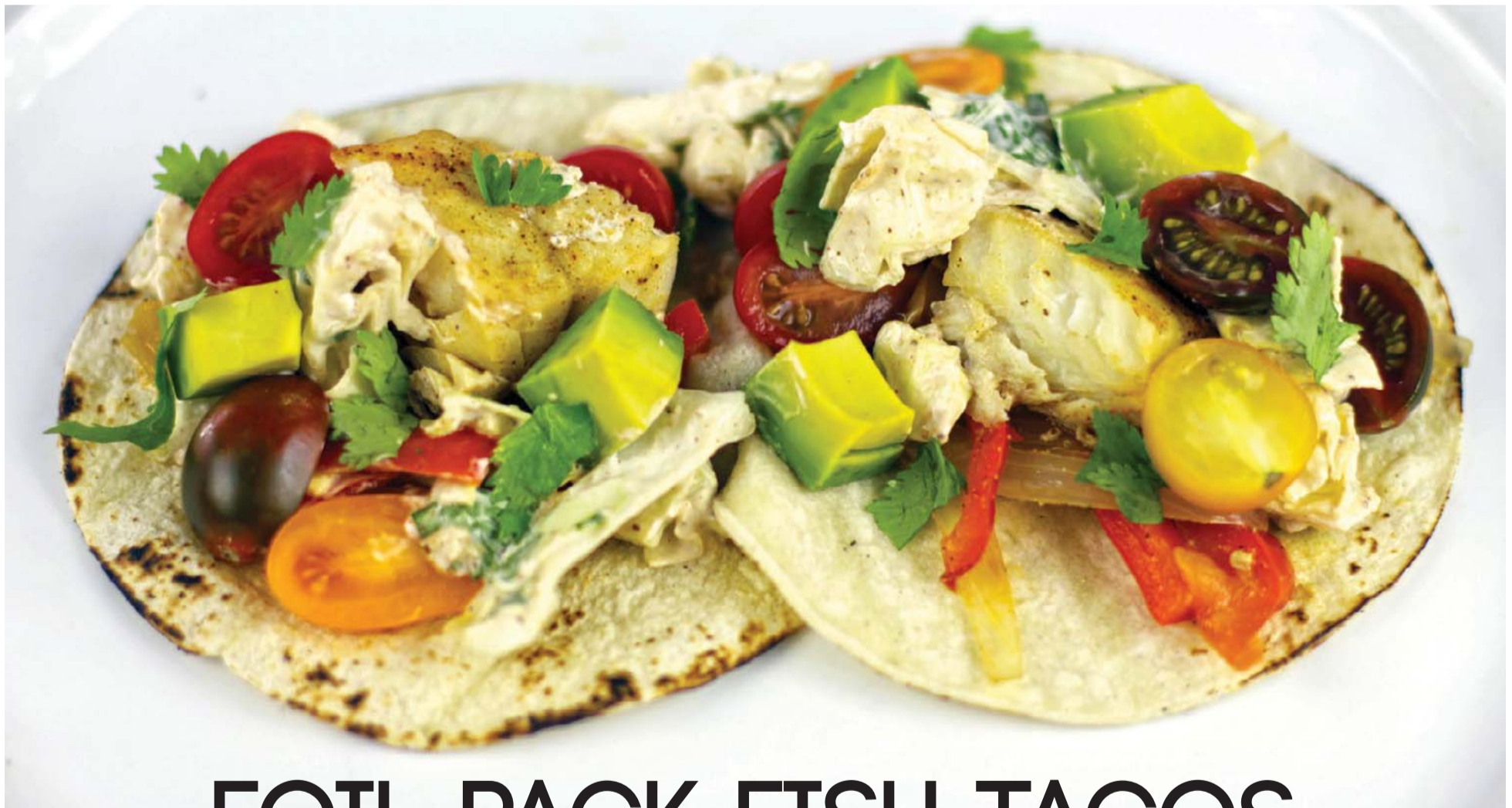
Social media tells me that in part of the country, kids are already back-to-school. And so we are teetering between the lazy days of summer and the impending promise of crisp cool air, long sleeves and the desire to fire down the grill and turn on the oven instead.

This is the perfect time to talk about one of my favorite shoulder-season cooking strategies: the foil pack! Place thinly sliced veggies with a little marinade or vinaigrette (even store-bought will work) in a large sheet of heavy-duty aluminum foil and fold shut into a packet, pinching the edges, and this handy little guy will be equally delicious whether cooked on the grill if you have a hot fall day, or in the oven, if you're already in pumpkin latte weather.

Add some fish or chicken, and you'll have a full meal, all packaged and pretty in individual servings, a presentation which thrills dinner party guests and

kiddos alike. Foil packet cooking is healthy - little fat is needed to accomplish tender, flavorful results. And, packet-cookery is incredibly forgiving - you (almost) can't overcook a foil packet. A few minutes extra in the oven won't ruin packet-fish like it would dry out a fillet cooked on the stovetop, grill or even just roasted directly in the oven. As a mom of four, I appreciate that kind of weeknight-meal flexibility. Try my foil-pack fish tacos to master some of the basics, like layering the ingredients in order of how quickly they cook - the bottom will cook more quickly since it will be touching a direct heat source.

Fish tacos are an excellent summertime favorite to take with us into colder weather. I love using Alaska cod because not only is it full of healthy fats (which feed my brain, heart and make me feel full), but it's available frozen year-round. And these packets do great with frozen fish - no need to thaw before making. Happy fall indeed.



FOIL-PACK FISH TACOS

Start to finish: 30 minutes
Servings: 4

Ingredients

Juice of 1 lime, about 2 tablespoons
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon granulated garlic
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 fillets of Alaskan cod, frozen, about 4-5 ounces each
1 yellow onion, sliced thinly (about 2 cups)
2 sweet peppers (red, yellow, or orange), sliced thinly (about 2 cups total)

Spicy slaw topping:

2 cups chopped or sliced cabbage
1/4 cup plain Greek lowfat yogurt
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
1 tablespoon lime juice
1 chopped green onion
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
Chopped tomatoes, for garnish (optional)
Salt and pepper
8 corn tortillas, for serving
Cubed avocado, for garnish

Preparation

Preheat oven to 400 F. In a large bowl, mix together the lime juice, olive oil, chili powder, cumin and granulated garlic. Cut four 12-inch-by-12-inch pieces of heavy duty foil. Dip the fish into the marinade and set aside. Toss the onion and peppers in the marinade to coat, and divide among the foil squares. Place the fish on top of the onions and peppers. Then toss the tomatoes into the marinade and then place on top of the fish, along with any remaining marinade. Close the foil up into packets, crimping the edges together. Place on a baking sheet and bake until fish is cooked through and vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes. (Subtract 10 minutes if using fresh fish). Meanwhile, mix together all the ingredients for the spicy slaw topping. Serve one foil packet per person, along with corn tortillas, slaw for topping and avocado if desired. — AP