



You will need: paper towels, a knife, a rack or aluminum foil, a baking sheet, a fork, a spatula, one small whole fish (a two-pound fish will feed two to three people; ours was farm-raised striped bass, but you could buy snapper, catfish, branzino, or a small salmon; it should come already scaled and gutted), olive oil, salt and pepper, one lemon, a couple of fresh rosemary sprigs

Step
1



Heat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit (it will take at least 20 minutes to warm up).

Step
2



Rinse the fish inside and out in the sink, and **pat it dry** with paper towels.

Step
3



Cut off the bottom back fin, then stick your knife inside the fish's belly where it has been gutted and **slice it open a little more** by penetrating deeper and extending the cut toward the tail.

Step
4



Place the rack inside the baking sheet and lay the fish on top of it. If you have no rack, cover the baking sheet in aluminum foil and lay the fish on that. (The bottom of the fish will get a little dried out this way, because it'll be in direct contact with the hot pan.) **Drizzle oil** over the fish, inside and out and on both sides, then spread it evenly with your fingers. **Season generously inside and out** with salt and pepper.

*From the store to the kitchen to the table: We outline the steps that get you from something raw to something cooked using simple ingredients, free of measurements and complicated techniques. A method that you can have in your back pocket and whip out whenever you like. We call it recipe-free cooking.

Illustrations by Bill Russell. Find this online at www.chow.com/stories/11079.



Step
5



Cut a few **thin slices of lemon** and place them inside the fish cavity, overlapping them slightly to fit. Place the **rosemary sprigs** over the lemon and close the fish.

Step
6



Put the fish in the oven, and check it after 30 minutes. If the skin pulls away easily and the **flesh underneath is flaky**, the fish is done. Let it rest five minutes.

Step
7



You can bring the fish to the table whole. When you're ready to eat it, **remove the skin and fins** by peeling them away with a fork and your fingers.

Step
8



Cut each side of the fish in half, remove the pieces with a spatula, and serve.

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