

# Nora

**2132 Florida Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008**  
**Phone: 202-462-5143 Fax: 202-234-6232**

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*2000 Pinot Blanc by Napa Wine Company*  
*paired with*  
**GRILLED WHOLE ROCKFISH WITH SUNDRIED TOMATO PESTO**  
**GRILLED POLENTA & BROCCOLI RAPE**

## **SUNDRIED TOMATO PESTO**

3 ounces sundried tomatoes  
1 TBSP minced garlic  
1/3 cup loosely packed basil leaves  
1 TBSP balsamic vinegar  
2 TBSP olive oil  
2 TBSP water  
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Sundried tomatoes come dry-packed or oil-packed. If you are using dry-pack sundried tomatoes, put them in a small strainer and dip them into boiling water for about 1 minute or until they are softened. Drain the softened tomatoes well before proceeding. This step is not necessary if you use sundried tomatoes preserved in oil.

Put the tomatoes, garlic, basil, vinegar, olive oil and water into the blender. Purée with an on and off motion until the mixture is chopped. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**NORA'S NOTE:** This makes about 1 cup of pesto. I like to spread this pesto on toasted bread to make a bruschetta, or use it as a sauce with a tubular pasta, such as rigatoni, and serve it with some freshly grated Parmesan cheese. Nowadays most tomatoes are not sundried anymore, but air-dried with machines. Sundried tomatoes are much more flavorful than fresh ones, they are chewy, sweet, dark red tomatoes and very appreciated in the winter months.

## **ROSEMARY POLENTA**

4 tsp olive oil  
1 tsp chopped shallots  
1/2 tsp chopped garlic  
2 1/4 cup water  
1/2 tsp minced rosemary needles  
1/2 tsp sea salt  
freshly ground black pepper  
4 ounces instant Italian polenta

Put 3 tsp of the olive oil into a medium saucepan and sauté the shallots and garlic for about 1 minute or until softened. Add the water, rosemary, and salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil and stir in the polenta. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring continuously, or until all the water has been absorbed and the polenta is smooth.

Rinse an 8-inch square or round pan with cold water to prevent the polenta from sticking to it. Pour in the polenta and smooth the surface with a wet spatula. Refrigerate. When the polenta is cool and firm, unmold it and cut it into 2 to 3-inch wide strips.

Preheat the grill or broiler.

Brush the polenta with the remaining olive oil and grill 2 to 3 minutes per side until warmed through and marked by the grill. Cut the polenta into wedges or triangles and keep warm in a slow oven.

**NORA'S NOTE:** Sometimes we double the amount of liquid and serve creamy or soft polenta. Polenta is the Italian word for cornmeal mush. It is a staple in Northern Italy and eaten for breakfast, lunch or dinner. If you cannot find instant polenta, use stone ground yellow cornmeal. The proportion for 4 people is 1 1/2 cups of cornmeal to 6 cups of water. Bring the water to a boil and add the cornmeal in a thin stream, stirring constantly to avoid lumps from forming. Add 1 1/2 TBSP olive oil and 1 TBSP salt to the cornmeal and cook for about 20 minutes or until the cornmeal or polenta is smooth and thick. You can flavor the polenta by adding chopped fresh herbs, grilled onions, olive oil, grated cheese or butter. I especially like cracked black pepper with polenta.

### **GRILLED ROCK FISH & BROCCOLI RAPE**

Four 1 pound whole rockfish, scaled, gutted and cleaned  
or four 6 ounce rockfish fillets  
2 TBSP olive oil  
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3/4 pound broccoli rape, trimmed

Preheat the grill or broiler.

Brush the 4 whole rockfish or fillets with 1 TBSP of the olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Grill or broil the whole rockfish for 6 to 8 minutes on the first side or until the flesh in the stomach cavity turns opaque. Turn and grill or broil the other side for about 6 minutes. If you are using rockfish fillets, put the skinned side of the fillet toward the heat source. The fillets will take less time to cook than the whole fish, about 4 minutes on each side.

Blanch the broccoli rape in boiling water or steam it in a medium saucepan using a collapsible steamer until it is tender and bright green, about 3 to 4 minutes. Drain and toss with 1 TBSP of the olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Assembly:** Divide the broccoli rape among 4 warm, preferably oval, dinner plates. Place one whole rockfish or one fillet on top of the greens on each plate. Add a spoonful of sundried tomato pesto and 3 or 4 triangles of grilled polenta to the side of each plate.

**NORA'S NOTE:** We use small farmed rockfish for this dish. I think a whole small grilled fish with its head and bones is much juicier than fillets or steaks. Rockfish used to be plentiful in the Chesapeake Bay until over-fishing and pollution drastically reduced their numbers. In the 80's a moratorium was placed on rockfish fishing. Until the supply of fish builds up again, fishing for "wild rockfish" in the Bay is only permitted for a limited period in the winter. Since "wild" rockfish is not available most of the year, we buy "farmed" rockfish from the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

Broccoli rabe or raab or rapini is related to the cabbage and turnip family. It is a leafy green with broccoli-like buds and a pungent bitter flavor. It is more popular in Italy than in this country. The rapeseeds are expressed into rapeseed oil, better known as canola oil, which has more cholesterol-balancing monounsaturated fat than any other oil except olive oil.