

By: JoAnn Takasaki

For a lot of people, the idea of going home to cook (not the "C" word!), with nothing in the fridge and no pantry to speak of, is a daunting task. But you're tired of Taco Cabana dinner #57 and gone are the days when instant noodles or mashed potatoes will be just fine, right? You need real food. You need it fast. And wouldn't it be great if you had enough for leftovers at lunch?

So what's for dinner?

Sid's Blackened Salmon of Love with Wild Rice and Steamed Asparagus

I first had this when my good buddy, Sid, made this for his fiancé, her family and me the week before the wedding. He was in and out of the kitchen in just over 30 minutes and I've never said a disparaging word about him since.

Prep: 5 minutes

Cook: 30 minutes

Uncle Ben's Fast Recipe Wild Rice

\$ 1.79

2 tbsp. Cayenne pepper

2 tsp. black pepper

3 tsp. Salt

1 lb salmon fillet (plan on about 1/4 lb per serving) \$10.62

1 bunch fresh asparagus spears (about 1 lb) \$ 4.13

8 oz. Container light sour cream \$ 1.25

2 tbsp. Milk

4 tbsp. Salsa verde (I like Arriba brand salsa verde) \$ 3.19

Cost: \$20.88

Divided by 4 meals: \$5.22/meal

Start your Uncle Ben's rice following directions on the box. Turn on your broiler. Make sure the rack will allow a few inches between the broiler and the fish. It will probably need to be on the second rung. Make yourself a cocktail and start prepping the asparagus.

soning. Coat it heavily if you like it super spicy. Coat it lightly if you just want a hint. Don't forget the sides and ends of the fillet.

You can prepare the salmon one of two ways – the less smokey way or the burn-your-eyeballs-out way. The vent over my stove is not that great so I prefer straight broiling. If you have good ventilation in your kitchen by all means fry then broil.

Place the salmon, meat side up on a grilling rack (I use one of those baking racks for cooling cookies on) over an aluminum foil covered baking sheet. You might want to coat the rack with a spray of oil to make sure it doesn't stick or use a non-stick rack. With your fan on high, pop the salmon under the broiler for about 8-10 minutes depending on thickness. Be sure to keep your oven door open a crack to keep it ventilated. If you like crispy salmon skin like I do, flip the salmon over and let it crisp up under the heat for a minute or two. You can tell if the fish is done because it will flake off nicely when you test it with a fork.

For the burn-your-eyeballs-out way, melt about a tablespoon of butter in a frying pan on med-high heat. Make sure the pan is one that you can put under a broiler (i.e. no Teflon and no plastic parts). And make sure your vent is on full blast and you've removed your smoke alarm battery (don't forget to put it back later). Slide the salmon skin up into the pan and let it fry for 6-8 minutes. Turn it and allow it to cook for another 6-8 minutes.

Turn the heat on high under your pot of asparagus. Bring the water to a boil and allow the asparagus to steam for 6-8 minutes until crispy-tender. (To nuke, arrange the spears in a square microwaveable dish with 1/2 cup water. Microwave for 6-9 minutes or until crisp-tender.)

While you're still waiting on the salmon and rice, mix the sour cream with a little bit of milk to loosen the



Break the tough ends off the asparagus spears. You can either microwave or steam the asparagus to a crisp-tender consistency. To steam, throw the spears in a steamer basket. Fill a medium sized pot with about 2 inches of water (to just below the basket). Put the steamer basket in the pot. We'll get this started in a few minutes.

Create the blackening seasoning by combining the cayenne, black pepper and salt on a plate. Coat the salmon on both sides with the blacken sea-

sour cream up a bit. Add more milk for more a more saucy consistency.

When everything's ready, drizzle a tablespoon or so of the sour cream sauce on it, top that off with a dollop of the salsa verde. You can serve the asparagus with some butter or even mayonnaise or eat it straight. And serve yourself some rice. Not too shabby, eh? Don't forget to pack up the leftovers for lunch. You'll be the envy of every brown bagger.