



**Russell Blake**  
COOK it

## Pan-seared Barramundi with Piperade

**Serves 4**

700-800g barramundi fillet, skin intact, cut into 4 pieces  
sea salt and pepper  
a little olive oil

### For the piperade

50ml extra virgin olive oil  
1 large brown onion, sliced  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 red capsicum, de-seeded and sliced  
1 green capsicum, de-seeded and sliced  
sprig of fresh thyme  
quarter tsp paprika  
2 big tomatoes, peeled and de-seeded  
fresh ground black pepper and sea salt

### To prepare the piperade

1. Heat the olive oil in a big saucepan over medium heat.
2. Add the onion, garlic and capsicum and saute for one minute, reduce heat, add paprika and thyme, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes, until the vegetables have softened.
3. Chop the tomatoes roughly and add to the vegetables. Simmer the mixture, uncovered, for 15 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated and the sauce has thickened. Season with sea salt and pepper and keep warm.

### To cook the barramundi

Pre-heat oven to 220C.

1. Heat a big (preferably non-stick) frypan over medium-high heat.
2. Season the barramundi on both sides, drizzle a little oil into the pan and place the fish, skin side down into the pan. Allow the fish to cook for 1 to 1½ minutes, then carefully turn over. Reduce heat and cook for 1 minute more. If your frypan is ovenproof, place into the oven (if not, place the fish on an oven tray then into the oven).
3. Cook a further 3 minutes. Check to see if the fish is cooked by pressing on the fillet with your finger. Barramundi is cooked when this feels very soft, as though you could press your finger all the way through the flesh.
4. Remove from pan, and serve immediately on top of a spoon full of piperade.

# Beautiful barra

**T**he Buccaneer Archipelago in the wild, remote region north-west of Derby, is home to some of the biggest tides and most spectacular scenery in the world.

If you are fortunate enough to take a scenic flight over Cone Bay, you may see 20 round sea cages, each about 20m wide.

These are home for hundreds of tonnes of saltwater barramundi, grown over two years from tiny fingerlings of a quarter of a gram to produce 3.5-4kg fish.

Guy Westbrook, from Marine Produce Australia, believes the pristine water and massive tides play a big part in the fresh, marine-driven flavour and delicate texture of the barramundi they farm at Cone Bay.

The large tidal movement ensures the fish are always swimming, keeping

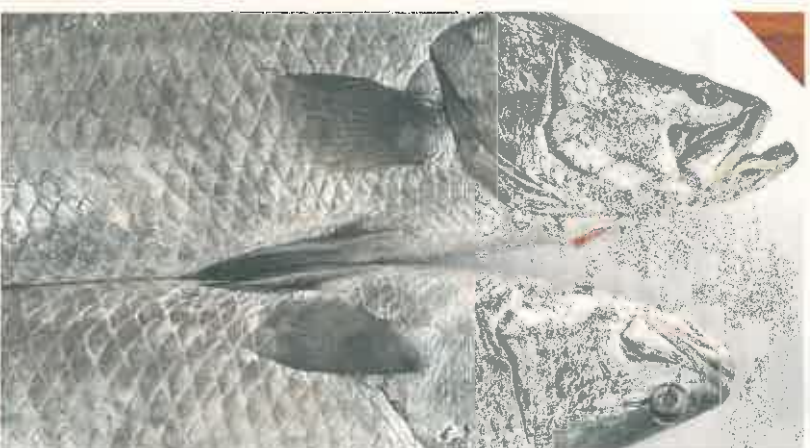
them "fit" and in great condition without the "fatty" layer under the skin that is characteristic of other barramundi.

The flavour is different from barra that are grown in land-locked ponds because the pond-grown fish don't have the fitness regime produced by the tides and tend to be flavoured by algae that grow in the ponds.

The fish hit the market super-fresh. Cone Bay barramundi has become a feature of many Perth restaurant menus and it's also available at good local fish retailers.

Even fishmongers in Brisbane, arguably the home of barramundi in Australia, are buying tonnes of the fish.

Try cooking the fish with its skin intact, as I have in today's recipe. You'll find barra can take a little extra cooking time than you would give to snapper, with a delicious, delicate, moist result.



Pictures: John Mokrzycki  
Tableware and table settings supplied by At Home Furniture Hightgate.