



Sally's Galley

By Sally Oulton*

Beer Battered Barra!

Barramundi is a much sought after fish by recreational fishermen. It has a reputation as one of Australia's premium eating fish. It is prized in restaurants for its light, sweet, mild flavour.

Beer is one of Australia's most consumed and loved beverages. So what better way to combine the two than cook Beer Battered Barra!

We all love a bit of deep fried seafood. There is something about that lovely crispy golden-battered fish and what better way to flavour that batter than with your favourite ice-cold beer.

Firstly, let me tell you a little about barramundi or what we prefer to call simply barra. Barramundi is a word borrowed from the Aboriginal language of the people of the Rockhampton area. It means "river fish with large scales" and for me it conjures images of far-north parts of Australia where it is found to inhabit its waters. Barra is best caught from February until November and fishermen tell me that the best time is straight after the wet season, around April.

They are colourful fish with a greenish-bronze coloured back, silver sides and shadings of white on their bellies. They are also a warm water fish and can be found in tropical coastal salt and fresh waters. It can be found in the sea, rivers, creeks and mangrove estuaries ranging from the rivers in North-west Australia to the Noosa River on the Sunshine Coast in QLD. After spawning in saltwater, juvenile barramundi migrate into tidal creeks and then disperse over inundated floodplains, and then it will return to the sea and then back again.

The larger barra can be found in



tidal waters where they feed on large banana prawns and surface fish such as garfish. Most barra begin their lives as males and change to females as they become much larger.

It is a superb eating fish and if you land yourself one in the wild, it will probably be a meal that you will never forget. It has a mild, sweet flavoured flesh and to top it off it is a versatile fish to cook. It can be fried, grilled, steamed, baked and even barbecued. The trick is not to overcook it.

When it comes to cooking beer battered fish, there are a few things you need to know.

Firstly, it is important that you choose the right oil. From a health perspective, oil with a greater proportion of mono-unsaturated or polyunsaturated fatty acids is recommended for deep-frying seafood. Olive oil is the healthiest and pure-tasting oil but best for pan-frying.

I would recommend Canola oil for deep-frying. It is also one of the healthiest cooking oils and best suited for beer battered barra.

Secondly, making the batter. We all want a nice, fluffy, crispy, golden batter with the taste of your favourite ice-cold beer.

I use self-raising flour to give that puffiness instead of plain flour. You can either follow the recipe below or simply pour a bottle (375ml) of beer into a mixing bowl and gradually stir in the flour until the batter has the consistency of thick cream. Then add in 10 ice cubes to keep it cool and use straight away or, you can follow this recipe.

Serves 4.

¾ cup of self-raising flour
¼ cup cornflour
220ml Ice cold beer
800g barra fillets





plain flour

Sift the flours together in a large bowl. Gradually whisk in the beer to form a thin batter. Leave batter to stand in the fridge for an hour. Stir before using. A chilled batter will produce a crisper coating.

When you are ready to cook. Heat the oil up over medium heat in a deep fryer if you have one or in a medium saucepan or a wok similar to what I like to use.

To indicate the oil temperature is ready to use, simply drop in a small piece of bread and if it takes 30 seconds to turn golden brown, it is ready.

1. Dust the raw fish with flour.
2. Completely submerge the pre-dusted seafood in the batter.
3. Remove from batter and gently shake off excess.
4. Lower the fish into the hot oil slowly. Fry the fish in batches so not to overcrowd.
5. Fry until golden brown, turning

once during cooking.

Serve up with some home-made chips. The trick to great chips is to deep-fry them twice. Firstly, fry the chips and remove half way through the cooking process. Allow to drain free of excess oil, then fry again before you are ready to eat until golden brown. You can also use the batter to deep-fry some onion rings.

Serve with tartare sauce and lemon wedges.

Bon-Appetit!

F&B

**Editor's Note: 37 yr old Sally Oulton was born in Perth, did a stint in NZ for five years, before settling in Dubbo, NSW where she grew up with her family. Leaving Oz in 1994, she travelled to Europe, did the secretarial thing for three years - and then changed course to study cooking in 1997. After her first cooking assignment (in the '97 Admiral's Cup) she spent the next ten years at sea - all over the world - in an extraordinary career that has so far embraced 60,000 miles at sea in everything from crack ocean racing yachts in Europe and South America, 'white yachts' in the Med, Caribbean and the Whitsundays - to Oz game boats off the Ribbons. Now back home, with her partner and a 19' Haines, they plan to explore the GBR via trailerboat.*

Sally's Traditions & Superstitions

Did you know . .

The Evil of Bananas

I never knew that bananas were bad luck on a fishing boat until I ended up working on board a game fishing boat many years ago during the Australian black marlin season. During a fishing competition, I had bought bananas on board for the three-day tournament. When the mate saw the bananas he screamed "Who bought those on board?" I looked at him confused.

He grabbed the bananas and took off running. I followed in pursuit and watched him throw a banana onto each of the other boats in the competition. The whole marina was in an uproar. I never knew until that day the evils of bananas on fishing boats. You can imagine, I was not popular, nor was the mate!

Since the 1700's, it has been widely believed that having a banana on board was an omen of disaster. One reason for this is believed to sheet home to what happened during the height of the Spanish's South Atlantic and Caribbean trading empire. Nearly every ship that disappeared at sea or did not make its destination was carrying a cargo of bananas, thus resulting in the belief that hauling bananas was a dangerous prospect.

Another theory is that bananas carried aboard slave ships fermented and gave off methane gas, which would be trapped below deck. Anyone in the hold, including cargoes of imprisoned humanity, would succumb to the poisoned air, and anyone trying to climb down into the hold to help them would fall prey to the dangerous gas.

There are a few more theories behind fishermen's mistrust of the yellow fruit. Whatever the theories, it is probably best you don't bring any bananas on board your next fishing expedition.....*just to be safe!*

Sally, **F&B**