LEMON BALM POACHED SALMON WITH CUCUMBER SLAW

When the weather shifts and the energies brighten, what I choose to eat also tends to shift. I swap out the hearty stews and roasted root vegetables for lighter soups, salads and fresh fish. In this recipe, I apply the concept of magical layering to my cooking process, and that is how you build layers of flavour to a dish. Just as you would steep a page in a tea or elixir before using it in a spell or to write upon, I poach the salmon in lemon balm tea to infuse the flavour into the fish. Try using different poaching liquids and teas such as ginger, orange peel, grapefruit, mushroom or fennel, and come up with something that is truly unique.

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients

Cucumber Slaw:

1	seedless cucumber, thinly sliced
1	fennel bulb, thinly sliced
1	shallot, minced
1	garlic clove, minced
3 tbsp	cilantro / fresh coriander
¼ cup	fresh dill
1 tsp	salt
¾ tsp	freshly cracked black pepper
1 tsp	lemon juice
1 tsp	white wine vinegar
3 tbsp	olive oil
½ tsp	pink peppercorn, crushed

Salmon:

1	shallot, halved
2	garlic cloves, minced
1	red onion, sliced thin
1	lemon, zested in strips
1 tsp	salt
1 tsp	fennel seeds
3 tbsp	butter
1 tbsp	lemon balm tea (4 bags)
4	6 oz. portions of salmon

Method

- *Make the slaw.* In a bowl, toss all the ingredients together and set aside to macerate (soften).

- *Make the poaching stock.* In a medium saucepan, combine 6 cups of water, the shallot, red onion, lemon zest, salt, fennel seeds and butter, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a low simmer and cook for 15 minutes. Add the lemon balm tea, turn off the heat and let steep for another 15 minutes. Strain the liquid into a deep skillet.

- *Poach the salmon*. Bring the liquid back to a low simmer over medium-high heat and then immediately remove from the heat. Season the salmon with a little salt and pepper. Place the salmon in the pan with the hot broth, cover and let cook for about 10 minutes, depending on how thick your salmon is. Check for doneness; salmon should never be overcooked, as this will result in a dry fish. It should be tender and flaky and the centre should be a translucent-pink. When you press down lightly with your fork, the fish should flake. Remove the fish from the poaching liquid and serve with the slaw.