Lesson Plan: Making Sardine and Potato Cake with Poppy Seed Velouté

Subject: Culinary Arts / Mediterranean Cuisine
Grade Level: High School Culinary Students
Duration: Approximately 2 hours

Objectives

Knowledge: Understand how Mediterranean ingredients like sardines, potatoes, and poppy seeds combine to create a flavorful and balanced dish.
Skills: Practice techniques in forming savory cakes, preparing a velouté sauce, and achieving texture balance.
Attitudes: Appreciate the use of locally sourced ingredients and how diverse flavors can come together in a cohesive dish.

Materials Needed

Ingredients

- **For the Sardine and Potato Cakes:**
    - 300 g fresh sardines
    - 400 g potatoes
    - 50 g breadcrumbs
    - 1 egg
    - 1 tbsp chopped parsley
    - 1 garlic clove
    - 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
    - Salt and pepper, to taste
- **For the Poppy Seed Velouté:**
    - 200 ml milk
    - 20 g flour
    - 30 g butter
    - 1 tbsp poppy seeds
    - Salt and pepper, to taste

Equipment

- Medium saucepan
- Large frying pan
- Whisk
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Mixing bowl
- Knife and cutting board

Lesson Outline

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- **Discussion Starter**: Ask students if they have experience with savory cakes or Mediterranean ingredients.
- **Cultural Context**: Discuss the Mediterranean diet and the use of sardines and poppy seeds in traditional dishes.
- **Lesson Objectives**: Outline the goals, focusing on balancing flavors and creating smooth textures in both the cake and velouté.

2. Safety and Sanitation Briefing (5 minutes)

- **Key Points**: Emphasize safe handling and cleaning procedures for raw fish.
- **Demonstration**: Show how to sanitize surfaces and tools after working with seafood.

3. Ingredient and Technique Overview (10 minutes)

- **Presentation**: Review each ingredient and discuss the balance between the richness of sardines and the mildness of potatoes.
- **Culinary Terms**: Define terms like "velouté" and "cake" to give students a better understanding of the techniques used in the recipe.

Cooking Activity

a. Preparing the Potato and Sardine Mixture (15 minutes)

- **Instructions**: Boil the potatoes with their skins on in salted water until soft. Peel and mash them. Clean and dice the sardines, removing the head and bones.
- **Activity**: Students measure and mix ingredients, learning how to balance flavors and textures.
- **Discussion**: Explain why potatoes help bind the cakes and give them a creamy consistency, while sardines provide a savory depth.
  AI Tip: AI can help monitor cooking times for the potatoes, ensuring they are soft but not overcooked.

b. Forming and Cooking the Cakes (20 minutes)

- **Instructions**: In a mixing bowl, combine the mashed potatoes, sardines, parsley, egg, breadcrumbs, salt, and pepper. Shape the mixture into cakes, then pan-fry in olive oil until golden brown on each side.

- **Activity**: Students shape and cook their cakes, observing how to achieve even thickness and a crispy exterior.
- **Discussion**: Discuss the importance of consistent size and shape for even cooking and presentation.
  AI Tip: AI can monitor cooking time, signaling when each side has browned and the cakes are ready to flip.

c. Preparing the Poppy Seed Velouté (15 minutes)

- **Instructions**: Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat, then add the flour, stirring continuously to form a roux. Gradually add the milk while whisking, cooking until the sauce thickens. Add poppy seeds, salt, and pepper.
- **Activity**: Students prepare the velouté, learning to maintain a smooth texture by avoiding lumps.
- **Discussion**: Explain how a roux is used to thicken sauces and why it's essential to whisk continuously when adding milk.
  AI Tip: AI can monitor temperature and timing, providing alerts to avoid lumps and ensure a smooth sauce.

Final Steps and Assembly
Serve the sardine cakes warm, drizzled with poppy seed velouté. Garnish with fresh parsley if desired.

Serving Suggestion
Serve on a bed of lightly dressed greens, drizzling additional velouté over the cakes for extra flavor.

Assessment

- **Observation**: Monitor students' techniques in forming and cooking the cakes, as well as preparing a smooth velouté.
- **Questions and Answers**: Ask students to explain how the ingredients complement each other.
- **Reflection**: Have students summarize their experience, focusing on balancing flavors and textures.

Closure (10 minutes)

- **Recap**: Review the steps for making savory cakes and velouté.
- **Student Sharing**: Allow students to share insights or ask questions.
- **Encouragement**: Suggest trying different types of fish or herbs to vary the recipe.

Extensions

- **Culinary Exploration**: Research other Mediterranean fish dishes and the use of poppy seeds in various cuisines.
- **Menu Planning Project**: Design a meal that incorporates the sardine cake as an appetizer with complementary dishes.

Resources

Handouts

- Detailed recipe instructions with notes on technique and presentation.
- Information on the Mediterranean diet and the significance of using local ingredients.

Recommended Reading

- Articles on balancing flavors in savory cakes and mastering sauce techniques.

Notes for the Instructor

- **Preparation**: Pre-boil potatoes if time is limited to focus on shaping and frying the cakes.
- **Safety Considerations**: Remind students of proper handling and sanitation when working with fish.
- **Adaptations**: Suggest tofu as an alternative to sardines for a vegetarian option.