



September 2001 – All about Salmon

There are 5 species of pacific salmon. The Sockeye salmon is the slimmest and stream line of all the pacific salmon, weighing 6-10 pounds and having a bluish/silver tinge to its skin. It has prominent glassy eyes and is almost a toothless. The flesh has a rich red colour that holds up well when canning, this is due to its high content in oils. It goes by a variety of names like 'the blueback' or 'reds'. The sockeye live primarily on plankton and crustaceans. Sockeye is the most valuable commercial species. Its red meat is great cold smoked, canned, BBQ'd or made into Gravlax. This fish is well suited for sushi, but must be prepared for this by freezing the fish at sea. There is a landlocked salmon called a kokanee, which is believed to be a relation to the sockeye as it has an identical life cycle, except that it never makes it to the ocean.

The Coho salmon are nicknamed 'silvers' or 'bluebacks'. They have white gums and a black tongue, with a few spots on their upper body and a silver tail. They can vary in size from 3lb to 30 lb. The coho is the most versatile of all the pacific salmon, great for hot and cold smoking, canning and BBQ'ing.

The Chinook salmon or 'spring salmon' also called a Tyee when over 30lbs and the Americans refer to the Chinook as 'a king salmon'. It can be identified by its black gums and spotted tail. It is the largest of the salmon sometimes coming in at 120lbs. The spring can come as a red spring or a white spring, some people think the white spring is more tastier. This is a great fish to cook a whole fillet on the BBQ with a glaze of maple syrup and salt and pepper. The spring is also great hot smoked and canned. Another great way to serve this fish is to poach the meat in a court bouillon, then serve it cold with a nice sauce Verdi.

The Chum salmon or 'dog salmon' or as I noticed in the stores is now being called 'silver bright', do not confuse this with the spring salmon. The chum salmon can be identified by a white spot on the anal fin and has no spots on the tail. Because the flesh is pale and low in fat it is not considered good for canning. When canned it brings out a bitter flavour and a strong odour. This fish is usually saved for smoking or eating fresh.

The pink salmon also known as 'humpbacks' or 'humpies' have no silver on its tail and its spots are oval. The pinks are the smallest of the salmon weighing in at no more than 11lbs. Because of there size these salmon are great for the BBQ, I just stuff there belly with some slices of lemon and fresh herbs, wrap in foil and bake 20mins/inch of meat. Pinks are also great for making candied salmon, because of there drier meat.

There are two other species of fish that should not get confused with the pacific salmon. They are the Atlantic salmon and the steelhead trout. The Atlantic salmon has been brought to BC waters to be raised in pens for commercial purposes. They can usually be identified by the 2-3 large spots on the gill cover, and crosshatched spots along the body above the lateral line. Often depending on the time of year, Atlantic salmon can have soft flesh.

Steelhead trout are slender and have a short head. They have fairly oily meat so are great to smoke and produce a great canned product.

The oil in the salmon is the omega 3 fatty acids that have been acclaimed to being very helpful with keeping cholesterol levels down.

St Jean's Cannery on Southside drive is a fabulous cannery for taking your fish, while in there I noticed they hot and cold smoke tuna as well.

Court Bouillon

This is a flavoured liquid for poaching salmon or other kinds of fish.

7c water

1/2c white wine vinegar or lemon juice

1c dry white wine

1 small onion-chopped

1 stick celery-chopped

1t salt

1t peppercorns

1 bayleaf

1 sprig fresh thyme

10-12 parsley stems.

-Combine all the ingredients and simmer for 20-30 mins, strain and return the liquid to the pot, bring back to a simmer. Gently place the fish pieces in the pot being careful not to over crowd the pot. Cool the fish in the court bouillon; this will help the fish to maintain its moisture.

Sauce Verdi

1 bunch watercress
Small handful chervil, chives and tarragon
3 egg yolks-hard boiled
Squirt of anchovy paste
1 lemon-juiced
-process in a food processor.
-slowly add
1/2c Olive oil
3/4c mayonnaise
1/4c cream
dash of Pernod (liquorice flavoured alcohol)

Smoke salmon mousse (St Jean's)

1lb cream cheese-soft
5 1/5oz. Smoked salmon
1/4t Lemon juice
1/8t Dijon mustard
pepper-to taste
2T green onions-chopped
2T Parsley-chopped
-Blend all the ingredients. Serve with crackers.
-It is nice to garnish this recipe with caviar.

Gravlax

This is a Scandinavian preparation of raw salmon cured in salt, sugar and spices. The marinating 'cooks' and tenderizes the fish. The salmon is then sliced paper thin and served as an appetizer or an hors d'oeuvre.

3lbs salmon-centre cut and filleted.

-place one fillet skinside down in a deep glass dish.

2 large bunches of dill

1/4c Coarse salt

1/4c sugar

2T white peppercorn-crushed

-place dill on the fillet, sprinkle with the remaining ingredients.

-Top with the remaining fillet skin side up.

-cover with foil and weight with a board and a 5lb weight, refrigerate 48-72 hours turning the salmon every 12 hours with the accumulated juices.

-to serve scrap away all the dill and spices and pat dry. Slice thinly on the diagonal and serve with squares of black pumpnickel bread with lemon wedges and mayonnaise.

BBQ'd Salmon

The oily flesh of the salmon is great for the BBQ, because it helps to keep it moist and absorbs some of the smoky flavour.

White wine marinade

1/2c White wine

1T white wine vinegar

1/2c Olive oil

2 Shallots- finely chopped

3t fresh tarragon

-brush with oil and marinate the salmon briefly in the marinade.

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