

## Captain Chris' Smoked Salmon / Trout

As with any game recipe, good preparation of the fish is critical. It's a good practice to leave the skin on the filets and remove the belly fat and lateral lines. If you want to remove the bones that's fine, but the truth is the meat will pull away from the bones easily after they are smoked. If your worried about small children and the bones then you can always have them eat off the tail sections where there should be no bones at all. The brine for "curing" the fish is often called a ham cure but don't let the name fool you, this is a perfect brine for fish and the formula is as follows;

25#'s of fish

1# of salt

1# of Brown Sugar

1 Gallon of water

20 to 30 hours of cure time in refrigerated temps (this is regardless of the size of the batch. 20 hrs minimum 30 won't hurt. It will only take so much cure)

As I said this is a formula. If you have 12.5 pounds of fish the recipe is cut in half. If you have 6 pounds of fish it is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the total recipe. A kitchen scale is adequate for the measurements. One thing of note is if you freeze the fish prior to smoking, cut back on the salt just a hair. I don't know the technical reasons but I do know that they will be a hair on the salty side if you use the full amount of salt on previously frozen filets. In the larger batches I use a water bath canner and pack ice around the kettle in a cooler if I don't have room in the fridge.

The smoking process is fairly simple however I would plan on tending the smoker regularly. On a calm day with a charcoal pan that has the single hole in the middle, the fish will take approximately 3 hours. Some of the newer Brinkman smokers have a charcoal pan which has fins cut into them and I will make an "X" pattern in the bottom to cover 4 of the air holes. This will slow down the heating process and allow for better smoke flavors to soak in and not make the fish burn on top. Even with the "X" factored in, this type of smoker will usually finish the job in 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 hours.

I use Kingsford charcoal which is reliable and has good flavor but I would suppose any would do. I would avoid any of the flavored ones such as Mesquite. We will be using wood chips and we don't want any outside help from a flavored charcoal.

I use a 2 to 1 mix of Hickory and Apple wood chips for my smoke. I use a bucket half full of water and add about 8 handfuls of hickory and 4 handfuls of Apple. Mix it all up and let the chips soak for about a half hour while you get the smoker set up and hot.

In the water pan I use a 50/50 mix of water and cheap Apple Juice. I line the water pan with Aluminum foil which greatly aids the clean up afterwards.

Lets Get Smoking!

1. Again, get your charcoal going and immediately get your water/apple juice mixture loaded so the water mixture starts heating up.
2. Coat your racks with a Pam for grilling type spray to reduce sticking.
3. Place your thickest fillets on the bottom rack skin side down and coat fish with a light coat of brown sugar.
4. I ALWAYS PLACE FISH SO THEY ARE OVER THE WATER PAN TO HELP AVOID STICKING AND ALLOW FOR THE HEAT AND SMOKE TO ROLL UP AROUND THE EDGES.
5. Spray the top rack and coat fish with brown sugar and put your thinner pieces and tail sections on the rack. (Top rack pieces will get done first)
6. Put the lid on.
7. Add a couple of handfuls of presoaked wood chips directly on top of the hot coals and close the access door.
8. Check on it in a half hour or so to make sure you have good smoke. Add chips as needed through the access door.
9. The fish will be done when you can take a fork and it will flake. Don't over cook! It dries them out.

Once the fish are done allow them to chill in the refrigerator thoroughly. The flavors will really come through once they are cold. Enjoy and be prepared for your new found fame!