

Rocky Mountain Smoked Trout

(by Chuckwagon)

We have a few lakes so high in these mountains that sometimes astronauts just paddle their canoes to shore then step out onto the moon. Our fishing techniques used on these high lakes must seem a little peculiar or strange to the uninitiated. You see, to catch pan-size rainbows and native trout, we don't use fishing poles! In fact, we don't use fishing tackle at all. We use cooking equipment instead!

The trick of catchin' these tasty little fellas is to place a black iron skillet over a slow, "up-wind" campfire near the waterline, add lots of garlic and a little butter, then carefully place a trout-catchin', hand-tied fly into the skillet. Then we run like hell and hide in the trees while the garlic aroma drifts across a lake. Sometimes it takes just a minute, but we wait patiently for the trout to get just one whiff of the garlic aroma. It's a sight to behold! You see, the trout actually stampede to the surface in herds rather than schools. Yes, yes, the deafening thunder of hundreds of fish trying to crowd into just one twelve-inch black skillet has been known to frighten away untrained, amateur fishermen in disbelief! My advice to beginners who haven't quite perfected the technique is to always bring along a "back up" cut of meat, just in case this carefully-planned strategy fails. A shoulder of lamb will do nicely. On the other hand, if one inadvertently or haphazardly happens to fall out of his canoe while holding an Eastern Utah Spinner with the fuse lit, there just possibly may be fish enough to feed the village.

Rocky Mountain Smoked Trout

Fillet or butterfly a few trout or any fish you wish to smoke and preserve. Place the fillets into a solution of two gallons of water mixed with four cups of uniodized salt . Allow the mixture three-quarters of an hour to filter out excess blood, then discard the saltwater and rinse the fillets completely in fresh, cold water. Next, prepare the brining solution.

"Chuckwagon's Chokin' Smokin' Potion" (Bland Curing Brine For Hot-Smoking Fish)

- 2 gallons water
- 1-1/2 lbs. uniodized salt
- 1 lb. white sugar
- 4 level tspns. Prague Powder #1
- 1-1/2 oz. black peppercorns (crushed)
- 1 oz. bay leaves (crushed)

This bland brine allows more prominent fish flavor to shine through. Heat the brine to 100°F. (38°C.) and stir it. Remove the pot from the heat and soak the fish in the brine three hours before rinsing it in cold running water. Hang and drip-dry the fish three hours in a well-ventilated area while a pellicle develops. Place the dry fish into a smokehouse and introduce light alder or hickory smudge at 120° F (49° C.) for a period of several hours. Taste the fish to determine the intensity of smoke flavor. Continuing heating, (with more smoke if desired) gradually increasing the smokehouse temperature to 140° F. (60° C.) Hold this temperature until a glossy, mahogany finish is developed on the surface of the fish in about three more hours.

The partially- cooked, wholly smoked fish is then gradually cooled in open air for six hours before being refrigerated. Do not be concerned that the fish may not be entirely cooked through. (Sushi is served raw). However, smoked fish indeed, remains a perishable product and should be refrigerated and consumed within thirty days. Try smoked, flaked, trout in your favorite green salad.

Boulder Mountain Smoked Fish (More Flavorful Curing Brine For Hot-Smoking Freshwater Or Saltwater Fish)

This “more spicy” brine allows less prominent fish flavor while creating an interesting taste due to the lime juice and honey with soy. The first step (as above) is to remove excess blood in the fish by placing fillets into a solution of two gallons of water with four cups of un-iodized salt. Allow the mixture forty-five minutes to filter out excess blood before rinsing the fillets completely in fresh, cold water. Next, prepare a brining solution.

Boulder Mountain Brining Solution:

- 2 gallons water
- 1-1/2 lbs. un-iodized salt
- 1 lb. white sugar
- 4 level tspns. Prague Powder #1
- 1-1/2 oz. black toasted peppercorns (crushed)
- 1 oz. bay leaves (crushed)
- 2 Tbspn. garlic powder
- ½ cup honey
- 1/3 cup lime juice
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup Worchester Sauce

Heat the brine to 100°F. stirring it occasionally. Remove the pot from the heat and soak the fish in the brine three hours before rinsing it with cold running water. Hang and drip-dry the fish three hours in a well-ventilated area while a pellicle develops. Place the dry fish into a smokehouse and introduce alder or light hickory smudge at 120° F. (49° C.) for several hours. Light applewood smoke is also another popular choice. Taste the fish to determine the intensity of smoke flavor. Continue heating, (with more smoke if desired) gradually increasing the smokehouse temperature to 120° F. (49° C.) Hold this temperature until a glossy, mahogany finish is developed on the surface of the fish in about three more hours.

Be careful not to overcook the fish. If it remains undercooked a bit, it will be fine. (In many cultures, fish is eaten raw.) The partially-cooked, wholly-smoked fish is then gradually cooled in open air for six hours before being refrigerated. Remember, smoking absolutely does not cure meat or fish. Smoked fish is perishable and it should be refrigerated and consumed within thirty days.

Best Wishes,
Chuckwagon