



TRADITIONAL SALMON PREPARATION AND PRESERVATION

“This traditional skill was passed on to me by my grandfather. Barbequing a fish over the fire has been practiced for many generations in the Nuxalk Nation. BBQ fish is one of my favorite meals, we even freeze the largest spring salmon of the season to eat in February for my birthday.”

“Barbecuing a Coho Salmon is a traditional meal for us; eating food from the land is important for our health. Practicing this knowledge is important to me to be able to continue these traditions for years to come.”

Materials

- Coho salmon
- Water
- Open fire
- Fish cutting knife
- Oven rack
- Kosher salt
- Brown sugar

- BBQ stick & wire
- Red cedar wood strips

Supplies

- Salt
- Sugar
- Oven rack
- Red cedar wood

Tools

- Fish cutting knife

Safety

- Eye protection
- Ear protection
- Safety boots

Procedure

1. Catch the fish and let it sit in running water overnight. Cut the fish the next day.
2. The fish takes about five-to-six hours to cook (depending on its size).
3. Prior to preparing the fish, it is important to have a strong fire going. We like to burn alder, spruce, hemlock, and even jack pine. It is important that the fire is hot, with lots of coals to cook the fish.

4. Remove the fins from fish – anal fin, pelvic fin, dorsal fin.
5. Remove the fish's head.
6. Create two slits near the fish's tail.
7. Cut down the top of the fish by running knife right along its spine and bones. Ensure that majority of the meat is on the flesh side of the salmon. Flip and repeat: run knife down the center of the fish, thereby separating the salmon meat from the bones.
8. Remove the center part of the salmon. The center includes the spine, bones and organs. We bring the fish organs back to the river for the salmon to eat.
9. Clean the salmon meat. Removing any bloody parts, white flesh, and stomach lining.
10. Rinse the fish off. Be sure to remove any excess blood. Lay the salmon down on oven rack. Add kosher salt and brown sugar to taste.
11. Create red cedar strips by inserting a knife into a long block of red cedar. Run the knife down the length of the wood along the grain until the wood splits. We use about five strips for this fish. These strips are used to hold the fish in place over the fire and to add flavour as the fish cooks.
12. Lay two cedar strips vertically onto the longest parts of the fish.
13. Lay three strips of cedar horizontally to secure the fish in place.
14. It is now time to put the fish onto the barbecue stick, which are handmade. The stick is similar to a pair of tweezers. The fish sits centered between the stick's two arms. It is pushed almost all the way down the arms. Secure the fish with some wire at the open end of the stick's arms. Make sure the wire is tightly secured so that the fish won't fall out.
15. The fish is now ready to be placed over the fire. We place the barbecue fish stick about a foot from the fire pit into the ground (meat side facing the fire), securing it in place with two blocks of wood. By this time, the fire should be burning at an appropriate temperature.
16. One person should always remain in charge of watching the fish cook throughout this process. Sometimes, the fish can start to slip off the stick and fall into the fire. Birds might try to have a bite.
17. It is important to let the fish cook slowly if you want the fish to be juicy.
18. When the fish has one to one-and-a-half hours left to cook, we turn the fish around so that the fish skin faces the fire to cook the back side of the fish.
19. After about five-to-six hours of slow cooking, your fish is done!
20. We eat our salmon with pasta salad, caesar salad, potato salad, rice, and other sides. Enjoy!

