SMOKED · ADVANCED

Cold-Smoked Cured Salmon on the Kamado, for the Christmas and New Year Table

A frozen centre-cut salmon loin, cured for 24 hours in salt and sugar and smoked with beech in an unlit kamado at 25 °C. A Christmas Eve starter and New Year zakuska, with ten days on the calendar.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
2940 min	**300 min**	**10**	**25 °C**

Ingredients

- **1.1 kg** centre-cut salmon loin with skin, about 30 cm long and 3-4 cm thick, frozen for 5 days at -20 °C or bought frozen
- **125 g** coarse sea salt
- **100 g** soft brown sugar
- **1 cda** black peppercorns, crushed
- **1 ud** unwaxed lemon, zest only, grated
- **20 g** fresh dill, chopped, plus a few sprigs to serve
- **1 carga** beech sawdust for cold smoking, as much as the generator spiral takes
- **1 ud** ice cube tray (optional, to temper the chamber)
- **200 g** soured cream or smetana, to serve
- **1 ud** loaf of dark rye bread, in thin slices
- **80 g** cold butter

Method

1 FREEZE AND THAW

Wrap the loin in cling film and freeze it at -20 °C or below for at least 5 days, in a three-star freezer or better, as AESAN requires for fish that is cold smoked. If your freezer does not get there, buy the loin already frozen. Thaw it in the fridge, below 4 °C, overnight. For Christmas Eve, count back about ten days.

2 CURE FOR 24 HOURS

Mix 125 g of salt, 100 g of sugar, the pepper, the lemon zest and the chopped dill. Spread a third in a glass dish, lay the loin skin side down and cover it with the rest, thicker on the top. Cover with cling film and leave for 24 hours in the fridge. At 12 hours, turn it over and pour away the liquid it has released.

3 RINSE AND DRY

Rinse the loin under cold running water until all the mixture is gone and pat it dry with kitchen paper. Set it on a rack, skin side down, uncovered, in the coldest part of the fridge, below 3.3 °C if yours gets there, for 12-24 hours. The Alaska guide gives 6 to 8 hours for a 2.5 cm fillet to let the salt distribute; a 3-4 cm loin needs longer.

4 DECIDE WHETHER TODAY WORKS

The kamado must be completely cold, in the shade and outdoors. Put a ThermoPro TP17H probe outside, in the shade, an hour beforehand. The generator adds some heat, so if the air is already around 25 °C, not today: wait for the night or another day. In December and January, on the Costa Blanca, any hour in the shade usually works.

5 LOAD AND LIGHT THE BASE

Fill the spiral of the Weber 17636 base with the grillart beech sawdust, tap it to settle it and press it down with a finger, without packing it. Hold a lit tea light under the start of the channel until the sawdust glows, then remove it. Leave the base outside for a few minutes to check that the ember is advancing, then put it on the charcoal grate, empty and free of ash, centred: in a 40 cm kamado there is no room to move it to one side.

6 SET UP THE CHAMBER

Lay the loin skin side down across the centre of the roughly 33-34 cm grid of the Kamado Bono Minimo, the only place its 30 cm fit. Push one probe into the centre of the fish and leave another with its tip in the air beside the loin: in a 3-4 cm loin the centre nears the chamber temperature within a few hours, so the 30 °C ceiling applies to it too. Vents: bottom at 1 cm, top at half. A still-wet surface forms its pellicle in the smoke.

7 SMOKE FOR 4 TO 6 HOURS

Hold the chamber at 25 °C. If it climbs past that, put the ice tray in the gap left on the grid next to the loin. Above 30 °C, open the dome; if it does not drop, stop and put the salmon back in the fridge. The same if the centre probe passes 30 °C. If the smoke is white and dense, open the bottom vent a little. At 4 hours, check the colour: look for an even golden tone and go up to 6 hours at most.

8 REST AND SLICE

Wrap the loin in cling film and leave it in the fridge, below 4 °C, overnight: the smoke spreads and the flesh settles. Slice cold with the Arcos 290 mm salmon knife, on the slant, in thin slices, from the tail towards the head and leaving the skin on the board. Serve on rye bread with butter or with soured cream and dill.

9 STORE WITHOUT VACUUM IN THE FRIDGE

Keep the salmon wrapped below 4 °C and eat it within a few days: the Torry note gives 5-6 days for commercial smoked salmon, and a home-made one should not go past that. For more margin, slice it, vacuum pack it and take it straight to the freezer, where the Alaska guide estimates 2-3 months. Thaw in the fridge.

Editor's tips

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If the cold window reaches the start of December, use it: smoke, slice, vacuum pack and freeze. On 23 December, move it to the fridge to thaw. The freezing afterwards does not replace the freezing before the cure.

- Before a salmon, practise on a semi-cured cheese or butter, which are more forgiving and teach you to read the smoke and the probe. The cold-smoking guide recommends them for beginners.
- Sawdust is the format the base is made for: a fine grain that burns evenly. Chips and chunks are for hot smoking over the coals, and heating pellets are not meant for food.
- If someone at the table cannot eat cold-smoked fish, the guajillo salmon reaches 60 °C in the centre, and AESAN considers that 60 °C for one minute throughout the piece destroys anisakis. For pregnant women, the recommendation is still to avoid smoked fish.

Gear for this recipe

Kamado Bono Minimo 40 cm

For cold smoking you do not need a big kamado, you need a sealed ceramic box with two vents. The 40 cm Kamado Bono Minimo has a grid of about 33-34 cm, and it takes a centre-cut loin of 1-1.2 kg and about 30 cm, on the grid above the generator: the separation that counts is height, not a side. Below, the 20 x 20 cm base fits on the charcoal grate, and the fibreglass gasket the manufacturer declares keeps the smoke circulating slowly with the bottom vent open one centimetre. A whole side will not fit: that takes a larger diameter. And one condition: the kamado is not lit that day, and if it was used the day before, check that the ceramic is completely cold, because it holds heat for hours.

mikamado.es/en/kamados/kamado-bono-minimo-40

Weber 17636: spiral cold smoke generator base, 20 x 20 cm

Without a charcoal fire, the smoke has to come from somewhere that barely heats. The Weber 17636 base is a 20 x 20 cm tray with a spiral channel that is filled with sawdust and lit at one end with a tea light: the ember advances slowly through the maze and releases a thread of smoke with very little heat, just what a chamber that must not pass 30 °C needs. Weber speaks of smoke "for hours" without giving a fixed figure, and this salmon calls for 4 to 6. It fits any kamado from 33 cm, so on the charcoal grate of the Minimo it goes in with room to spare.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-cold-smoked-base-generador-humo-frio

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grillart beech sawdust 0.5-1.0 mm for cold smoking, 3 kg

The spiral of the Weber base needs fine sawdust, not chips or pellets. The grillart beech sawdust has a grain of 0.5 to 1.0 mm according to its data sheet, which recommends it for cold-smoke generators; neither of the two sheets mentions the other, so the pairing is a deduction from grain size, not a declared compatibility. Beech is among the mild woods, with a sweet and discreet smoke, that the woods guide reserves for fish: over five hours on a fatty salmon loin, a strong wood would leave bitterness. The 3 kg bag gives several loads, also for cheese or butter.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/grillart-harina-haya-ahumado-frio-3kg

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ThermoPro TP17H: 4-probe wired thermometer, -10 to 300 °C

In cold smoking the deciding figure is a low one, and the dome thermometer does not read it. The ThermoPro TP17H has four wired probes and a range from -10 °C, so a December night does not leave it blind. In this recipe three of them work: one with the tip in the air next to the loin, marking the 25 °C target and the 30 °C ceiling; another pushed into the centre of the fish, which within a few hours approaches the chamber temperature and must not pass 30 °C either; and the third outside, in the shade, which tells you before you start whether today works. No app: you read it on the screen.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/thermopro-tp17h-4-sondas-cable

Arcos Universal Salmon / Fish Slicing Knife 290 mm

A cured and smoked salmon is eaten in thin, long slices, and a wide, stiff chef's knife crushes them as it saws. The Arcos Universal 290 mm salmon knife (salmonero), from the Albacete maker, has a narrow, long, flexible blade: it cuts on the slant in a single pass, follows the skin without taking it along and produces even slices from a 30 cm loin. It works best on cold salmon straight from the fridge, after the wrapped rest, because the cured flesh is firm. A pass on the honing steel before each use keeps the edge straight, and that shows in slices that do not tear.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/arcos-universal-salmonero-290

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/salmon-curado-ahumado-en-frio-kamado

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