

Diane's Blog
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Hooked on Salmon

As I wrote in the introduction to my cookbook *Salmon*, published in the spring of 2005, "I'm hooked – fundamentally and permanently in love with every aspect of salmon. The legends and culture of the fish captivate me, their wondrous and complex life cycle amazes me, and salmon is a visual and savory delight to my senses."

I traveled to Norway, Scotland, and Alaska to research and understand the history and stories behind the demise of wild Atlantic salmon and the birth and growth of the farmed salmon industry that began in Norway. In addition, I wanted to explore how Alaska, year after year, has managed and supported a sustainable wild salmon harvest. Salmon fishing and farming certainly has its challenges and rewards.

Many things have remained the same since the spring and summer of 2003 when I did all this traveling, but a lot has changed. Fish farming has expanded to meet demand and much of the salmon fishing off the California and Oregon coasts has collapsed due to dwindling salmon stocks. We continue to look to Alaska as the largest harvester of wild salmon stocks. The tightly regulated and managed fishing practices by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game illustrates what long-term responsibility and planning means for sustainability. Salmon is not only a wondrous species and food source, it is of tremendous economic value to the state and all the fishers and related supporting industries.

But what about this fabulous fish for eating and nutrition!

Nutrition-wise, salmon is not only a delicious protein source but a valuable one, too. Salmon is rich in omega-3 fatty acids that help lower blood triglycerides and cholesterol levels, keeping the heart healthy. Salmon contains vitamins A, D, B⁶, and B¹², as well as niacin and riboflavin. Salmon is also a good source of vitamin E, a powerful antioxidant. A French study has found that people who eat fish at least once a week are less likely to develop dementia. Other laboratory studies indicate that fish oils (particularly omega-3's) help control inflammatory processes that are associated with Alzheimer's.

Honestly, I never tire of eating this fish. After writing the book with seventy-five recipes included, I thought, "Hmmm, I could easily develop another hundred." Salmon is that versatile. Give me lox and a bagel for Sunday brunch and I'm delighted, grilled salmon for dinner and I'll take seconds, and I never pass up a tray of hors d'oeuvres that includes salmon. Salmon can be prepared in a myriad of ways – from smoked to grilled to poached to pan-roasted. With salmon season in full swing and summertime grilling here, get out your planks, grill baskets, and cedar sheets, it's time to put some salmon on the barbie.

Happy Grilling!
Diane