

Title:

Salmon - An Affordable Luxury

Word Count:

553

Summary:

Salmon has a reputation as a luxury fish, but is nowadays quite affordable. Find out more about this versatile fish.

Keywords:

salmon, fish, food, cooking

Article Body:

Salmon is one of the most versatile fish we can buy, and despite its longstanding reputation as a luxury fish, is nowadays surprisingly affordable.

Salmon are available in both farmed and wild varieties, and while the wild salmon has the edge in terms of both flavour and texture, the quality of the farmed fish has improved greatly over the years and is now a fish that makes thoroughly respectable eating. The comparative rarity of wild salmon, which is only available for half the year between February and August, is at least as responsible as quality for the higher prices it commands compared to its farmed cousins.

Most of the wild salmon you can buy will be from the Atlantic Ocean, both off the shores of North America and Northern Europe, with Scotland being an especially famed source of the fish. Salmon can also be found in the Pacific, although these fish tend to find their way into cans rather than the wet fish counter of your local fishmonger.

An enduring image of wild salmon is of a sleek silver arch of fish leaping up weirs and waterfalls, and this arises because they are born in freshwater, but spend most of their lives in the sea after migrating while young. They will stay in the sea for between one and four years, before returning to the very same river they were born in to spawn, which is usually their last act before expiring from the exhaustion of the journey upstream.

Farmed salmon, in contrast, spend their entire lives in lochs or river estuaries, swimming in net cages, sometimes at densities higher than is healthy for the fish. Fish farming has gathered something of a bad reputation over the

years, and it's true that salmon farms once showed a similar disregard for animal welfare that you'd find in most industrialized farming operations. In recent years, though, public opinion has forced a rethink, and standards have widely improved - you can even find organic farmed fish these days.

When you come to buy salmon, the usual rules for buying fish apply. Make sure you can see a whole fish so that you can get an idea of how fresh it is - the pre-wrapped anonymous fillets packaged in a 'protective atmosphere' you find in many supermarkets is a gamble at best. A fresh fish will have bulging eyes rather than sunken ones, will feel firm to the touch, and should not smell 'fishy' as this indicates that it is past its best.

Depending on how many you are feeding, you can buy a steak which is cut from the shoulder of the fish, a fillet from nearer the tail end, or even a whole fish. Tail end fillets possibly offer the best eating, as they are more or less free of bones apart from the pin bones which can easily be removed during preparation. Steaks, however, are a more meaty cut and are perhaps more suited to cooking methods such as a barbecue or grill.

Whichever cut you buy, you can be assured that your health will benefit - as an oily fish, salmon is high in Omega 3, which has been shown to be of use in preventing heart problems, and is widely believed to be helpful for brain and nervous system development and operation.

Enjoy your salmon!