



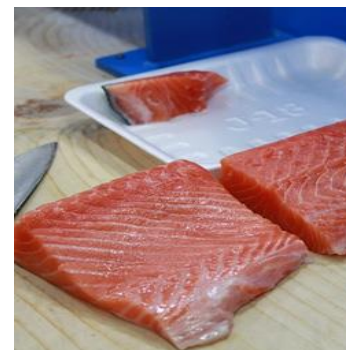
During the warmer months most people will cook on their [grills](#) as an alternative to heating up their homes by cooking indoors. However cooking the same ol' recipes on the grill will become boring and many will be on the search for more that they are able to [cook outdoors](#). Salmon is a great option for cooking on the grill to get away from the everyday hamburgers and hotdogs. While these traditional grilling staples are part of summer festivities, it is nice to change things up a bit and enjoy other meats with a smoky [flavor](#) from the grill.

Salmon can be prepared in most any manner, such as smoked, grilled, baked, broiled, fried, or poached. You can grill a salmon whole or cut into fillets and steaks. A steak is a crosscut slice from a large dressed fish and is usually ½ to 1 inch thick. A fillet is a boneless piece of fish cut from the side and away from the backbone. Salmon fillets and steaks are the most common for cooking both charcoal and gas grills. It is such a flavorful meat and full of healthy oils that as long as you do not overcook it, you have succeeded. Follow these tips for cooking salmon on the grill.

How to Choose the Perfect Salmon

Fillets and Steaks

- Fresh salmon should have a firm texture and be pink in color. Look for moist cleanly cut fillets and steaks that have a slight sheen appearance. Gaps or separation of the muscle fibers on a cut of salmon is a sign of old fish.
- Do not choose salmon that has a strong fishy odor. The fishy odor should be mild.
- Packaged fillets or steaks should be stored in an airtight container with no visible liquids. If frozen, the container should be airtight with no visible frost.



Whole Salmon

- Fresh, whole salmon should appear firm; have glossy skin, and clear (rather than cloudy) eyes.
- The gills should be bright red and the flesh a light pink and somewhat translucent.



- Whole salmon needs to be completely packed in ice.
- Refrain from purchasing salmon that has a strong "fishy" smell. The fish odor should be mild.

Preparing Salmon for the Grill

Fillets and Steaks

- Keep salmon refrigerated until you are ready to grill. Best practice is to grill it the day that you purchase it; however you can keep it in the coldest part of your refrigerator for 1-2 days. If the salmon has not been previously frozen, you may freeze it and it will last up to 3 months.
- When thawing frozen fish, place it in your refrigerator and allow it to thaw for 1-2 days.
- Keep the skin intact. The skin will prevent the salmon from curling up and flaking apart while grilling. It is easily removed after grilling is complete.
- Make sure to rinse the salmon and pat it dry with a paper towel before grilling.
- Brush the meat and the grill grate with a thin coat of cooking oil to prevent sticking. Brush the grates clean with a wire grill brush and wipe them with an oiled paper towel before and after you cook as you would a cast iron pot. Don't slather or rub the oil on when your grill is hot because it will simply smoke. Use high-heat oil like canola.
- If you choose you could also add some flavor to your salmon by applying a dry rub or sprinkling it with some spices and herbs. Thyme, basil, and dill work very well with grilled salmon. You could also try marinating it in your favorite sauce. Just one little reminder, salmon will pick up flavors quickly, so 15-30 minutes in a marinade can be enough to add lots of flavor.



Whole Salmon

- Store the salmon on ice or in the refrigerator until ready to grill.
- Rinse the salmon inside and out under cool water to remove any stray scales or bones.
- Pat the salmon dry with paper towels.
- The body cavity of the fish can be filled with fresh herbs and lemon slices if desired.
- Aspic, cucumber, lemon, dill, and fennel is a classic combination used to fill the cavity of a whole salmon.
- Close the body cavity of the fish and tie with butchers twine.



- Score 3 diagonal cuts on both sides of the fish.
- Brush the whole fish (including the head) and the grill grate with a thin coat of cooking oil to prevent the salmon from sticking.
- If using a grill basket, oil the basket as well.

Time for cooking it on the Grill

Fillets and Steaks

- Preheat your grill to a medium heat. To test the level of heat, place the palm of your hand close to the grill rack and count the number of seconds you can hold it in that position. If the heat is medium, you should be able to hold your hand in the position for about 4 seconds.
- If using a charcoal grill, make an indirect side (no coals), and a double row of hot coals on the other. Grill when the coals are red and starting to ash over.
- Place fillets in a well-greased grill basket to ensure they stay intact. Nonstick or greased foil works well too; just be sure to cut a few small slits in the foil to let the juices run off. You can also grill salmon fillets and steaks directly on a greased grill rack or on a plank to add flavor.
- Always start cooking your salmon fillet with flesh side down when grilling.
- To grill salmon on a charcoal grill, place the fish on the grill rack directly over medium coals. Grill, uncovered, for 4 to 6 minutes per 1/2-inch thickness.
- For a gas grill, after preheating, reduce heat to medium. Place salmon on the grill rack over heat. Cover and grill for 4 to 6 minutes per 1/2-inch thickness.
- If you have a salmon steak, place the thinner end toward the front of the grill (closest to you and lid opening) as this tends to be the coolest part of the grill. That way the thicker section will get the most heat.
- Watch for the moment that the fish gently releases from the grill. You can check by putting your spatula under the salmon, carefully lifting to see if it will come away without sticking. The moment it does, flip the whole fillet over to the skin side.
- If you see a lot of white seeping out of the fish, it is overdone (a little white is OK).
- When you flip, turn the filet so that it is positioned across the grill, giving you the option of turning off the burner under the small end while continuing to cook the large end. If you are grilling with charcoal, lay the thinner part over your indirect side.



Whole Salmon

- Use the indirect grilling method.
- With a high heat setting, heat the grill and then turn down the heat to medium before placing whole fish on the grill.
- Grill the fish 3-4 inches from heat, 20 to 25 minutes (10-12+ minutes per side) per ½ pound.
- Turn the whole salmon only once during cooking.
- Applying a basting sauce during the final few minutes of cooking will help prevent the salmon from turning black.



How to Make Sure Your Salmon is done

- Salmon continues to cook for 1-2 minutes after being removed from the grill.
- Cook the salmon until meat begins to change color and becomes flaky.
- To check the flakiness, insert the tip of a sharp knife near the bone or at the thickest part of the salmon and pull slightly.
- Well done salmon appears opaque and will flake easily.
- Another way to check if your salmon is done is by an instant-read thermometer. Insert it horizontally into the fish. This is especially useful for thick salmon steaks. Remove the fish from the grill when it reaches an internal temperature of 140 degrees F.
- When grilling salmon with the skin on, let the skin get crisp and brown. The skin will easily remove once you the salmon is completely grilled.



Now that you have all of the tips and tricks it is time to grill salmon like a pro. Add a few garnishments and some complimentary side dishes to impress your guests or family with your mad grilling skills and flavorful succulent salmon.