

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Smoked Fish?

It's getting to the season when packets of smoked salmon might be arriving as gifts. Some people love it and thank their friends with delight. Others might look at it, send a weak 'thank you' and wonder what on earth to do with this stuff. This is the fish that is rolled in rice and seaweed in a sushi Philadelphia roll, or sliced very thinly and served with cream cheese on a cracker or bagel. If you're all ready a convert, or at least willing to give it a try, here are a few things to know because there are differences.

Hot or cold smoked? Most smoked salmon on the market now is cold smoked. Cold smoking means that the temperature of the fish never got above 86°F. Since the temperature is so low the fish is not cooked. The flavor and texture, while not like raw fish, is very distinctive and not like cooked fish either. You can slice it really thinly, so thin you can almost see through the slices. Smoking darkens the color too, so it could be anything from dark pink to almost brown.

Hot smoked salmon on the other hand has been smoked at about 140°F. With the higher temperature it only takes 6 to 10 hours to smoke the fish. It's much faster but it also cooks the fish. So the texture is very different. This salmon flakes like cooked fish. The flavor is also stronger. The high heat dries out the meat, so that it can't be thinly sliced like cold smoked fish. The color will be similar to cold smoked fish.

The benefit of hot smoking, besides the shorter time, is that hot smoking does a much better job of killing bacteria. Without very careful processing and handling, cold

smoked salmon is more likely to be carrying bacteria, including food poisoning types. Cold smoked salmon should be kept refrigerated, and will last for up to 8 weeks. Hot smoked salmon is often okay to keep on the shelf as long as the package is not opened. Check the label on the package to see what your salmon requires. Both kinds must be kept refrigerated once the package is opened. If the fish smells very strong, or if it's slimy, mushy or has any strange colors on it, throw it away.

Before fish is smoked by either method it must be salted first. It can be packed in dry salt or soaked in a strong salt brine. Sugar and other seasonings can be added during the salting process too. This helps to firm the flesh, keep it moist and builds the flavor. But it's a problem for people concerned about their health. All that salt really pumps up the sodium. While plain cooked salmon only has 40 to 50 mg of sodium in a 3 oz serving, the same amount of smoked salmon has almost 700 mg. That's half a day's allowance of sodium in one little piece of fish! How much can your blood pressure handle?

On the other hand, salmon is one of the good sources of those omega-3 fats that are so good for our hearts. They help keep our arteries more flexible and keep cholesterol from changing or sticking to the arteries. These same omega-3 fats help protect our livers from too much fat. And they might even help slow down the development of insulin resistance or diabetes. If you get canned salmon that still has the bones, and you crush those soft cooked bones and eat them with the fish, you'll get plenty of calcium too. Calcium is one of the minerals that helps manage our blood pressure. But smoked salmon has no bones, very, very little calcium and lots of sodium.

Here's an easy way to use smoked salmon if you're not ready for it with cream cheese on a bagel. This will make a nice dinner served with a vegetable and salad.

### Pasta with Smoked Salmon

8 oz spaghetti or other pasta	¼ cup pine nuts or chopped walnuts
2 Tbsp oil	1/3 cup chopped onions
2 cloves minced garlic	¼ cup milk or evaporated skim milk
1 Tbsp lemon juice	2 Tbsp grated lemon rind (zest)
2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley	4 oz smoked salmon

Cook pasta according to package directions. Save the liquid when you drain it. Toast the nuts in a dry frying pan on medium heat or in a 325°F oven for 10 minutes, until you can smell the aroma. Set aside. Heat oil in large skillet. Add onion and garlic, cook for 2 minutes. Add 1/3 cup pasta water (or white wine), lemon juice and 1 Tbsp lemon zest. Turn heat to high and let cook until liquid is half gone. Add milk and heat gently. Stir hot pasta into sauce. Add more pasta water if it's too dry. Crumble or chop the salmon into bite-sized pieces, add to pasta with parsley. Serve hot. Serves 2 to 3.