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Camp Delicious!
Don't Fear the Fish

Fresh fish is delicious but amateur chefs may be intimidated by the idea of starting off with a fresh whole fish! Chef Edwin Smith, Executive Chef at Monterey Bay Fish Grotto in Pittsburgh, PA, demonstrates a mouth-watering salmon recipe – and it all starts with step-by-step instructions to de-scale, de-bone, and cut a whole fish.

TRANSCRIPT

Narrator:

If you think you don't like seafood, get set to see *salmon* in a whole new light! Salmon live in both fresh and salt water, and it's classified as an oily fish, rich in protein and omega-3 fatty acids. That's a *good* type of fat our bodies need to function.

When it comes to making fish part of a healthy diet, shoppers face an age-old dilemma: should you buy *whole fish* . . . or *already-cut fillets*?

Buying fillets may save you time, but experts say buying a whole fish and cutting it yourself *does* have advantages.

Fish stay fresh longer when they're whole rather than cut.

And, a whole fish is easier to judge for quality than a fillet. For instance. . . You can see whether the eyes are cloudy or clear. Once a fish begins to deteriorate, the eyes dry out and become cloudy.

Fresh fish is firm, not soft, and the fins should look healthy, wet, and intact. Gills should be bright in color. You can't judge any of that if the fish is filleted in-store.

So go ahead! Give fish a try!

Here's a guide to the basics of cutting a whole fish.

Chef Edwin Smith, Executive Chef – Monterey Bay Fish Grotto, Pittsburgh, PA

Hello, my name is Ed Smith and I'm from Monterey Bay Fish Grotto. How we're going to start, is that we're going to your knife right behind this fin. We're going to go right along the

collarbone until we hit the spinal cord on the very back of the head. It should come to a pretty decent stop. We're going to follow this through and cut all the way down, exposing that skin and the flesh behind the head. You want to angle your knife in to the spinal cord, like you're going to the front of the fish.”

Narrator:

For the next cut, slice right along the backbone. You should start hearing the sound of the rib bones as you cut through them.

(Sound of salmon ribs cracking)

Chef Edwin Smith, Executive Chef – Monterey Bay Fish Grotto, Pittsburgh, PA

As you're lifting this belly piece up, which is the bottom of the fish, you're going to cut straight through, getting right on the side of the dorsal fin. And following that backbone, all the way back to the tail.”

Flip this all the way over. If you see your backboard all the way through, you made a really good cut. The next step is taking fish, flipping it over, and doing the same exact thing on the next side. By holding this fin up, cutting through that through that collar...cutting down the backbone. And sometimes this this second cut's a little bit more difficult than the first one because you kind of have to hold the belly flap up with your cutting hand. We want to hold the spine in the head with your hands, and just work all the way down, using just a tiny bit of a seesaw motion. It'll come right off. And as you flip this piece over, you should just have the spine, the tail, and the fins all together.

Narrator:

Now it's time to trim off the *belly fat*. But don't throw it out! Some people like to make soup stock out of it. . . smoke it. . . or sauté it and use it in salmon cakes.

Once the belly fat is gone, it's time to remove the *pin bones* in the salmon. Pin bones are actually calcified nerve endings attached to the fish's spine. Most salmon fillets will have approximately 15 pin bones that extend from the head of the fillet and go halfway to the tail.

Use a pair of tweezers or needle-nose pliers to pull the pin bones out at an angle. Gently run your fingers over the fillet to locate all of the pin bones.

Your salmon is now ready to be sliced! Use a sharp knife with a thin, flexible blade to glide through the flesh without ripping or tearing it. Here, Chef Ed starts by slicing it on a 45-degree angle.

Chef Edwin Smith, Executive Chef – Monterey Bay Fish Grotto, Pittsburgh, PA

That gives you a flatter piece. If you're presenting this as a meal, it is cooked very nice, and it gives you a really nice plate presentation. The next cut, I'm going to show you is we can take right along this center piece where the spine was. We're going to go straight down here. And

then we ended up with two really nice fillets, and you can, I can cut these, and they're really nice, nice sauté pan. Or if you're going to marinate them overnight. And particularly, this one is my favorite cut, because I think that it gives you a really nice piece of fish.

Narrator:

Once your salmon is sliced, it's time to think about how to serve it! Chef Ed prepared *this* salmon with a spicy mixed vegetable slaw, and he served it over rice with a teriyaki dressing.

But salmon is a versatile fish, with lots of options for how to prepare it. It can even replace beef or chicken in many popular recipes! It's also a great fish to help you discover *new cuisines*, because many salmon dishes are rooted in different cultures and traditions.

Asian cultures use it in sushi. . . and also soups.

Norway is the largest producer of salmon in the world. . . and a popular dish there is *gravlax*. The salmon is cured using salt, sugar, and dill.

Lox is a type of *brined* salmon included in many dishes in European Ashkenazi Jewish cuisine, and it's a popular food at many American delicatessens!

And salmon is considered *sacred* to the Native peoples of the American Northwest and Canada's First Nation. The fish has been a significant part of their economy, culture, and spiritual identity for centuries.

With so many flavors and cuisines to explore, why not give salmon a chance?

Chef Edwin Smith, Executive Chef – Monterey Bay Fish Grotto, Pittsburgh, PA
There's no reason to be nervous about cutting a whole fish. Just give it a try."

Learn more about *Camp Delicious!* and other Luminari camps for teens at www.luminari.org