

## SMOKED TROUT

Because of their relatively small size, even texture, and great flavor, trout are a perfect fish to hot smoke. Hot smoking, as opposed to cold smoking which is used to preserve fish, cooks the trout while it adds that great smoke flavor. Smoked trout are a great meal, appetizer, and can be used to flavor many dishes from fish soup to smoked trout dip.

To flavor and moisten trout before you put them in the smoker you can start with a brine.

Combine about 1 tablespoon of plain or 2 tablespoons of kosher salt to 1 cup of water. You will, of course, need enough brine to completely cover the fish. Add small amounts of seasonings to the brine. Smaller fish like trout, don't need to spend a lot of time in a brine. About 1 hour will do for smaller fish. You want these fish to be cleaned and ready for the smoker before you brine then and have them laid open so the brine can get inside. Brining can be completely optional for smoked trout. (Suggest using half canning salt and half lemon pepper for the brine. Add small amounts of onion powder and garlic powder.)

While the trout brines, you can prepare the smoker. Small trout (about 8 inches) can be completely smoked in as little as an hour but more time will add extra flavor. Watch the fish to make sure they don't dry out, but leave them in the smoker for up to 4 hours at a temperature around 225 degrees F. Use a mild wood like a fruit wood or oak to smoke with. Traditionally alder is used with fish and if you can get some it makes a great smoke flavor.

Try to place the trout in such a way as to let the smoke get to the insides of the fish. Once the trout is smoked it will be easy to remove the bones because the slow cooking process helps to separate the meat from the bones. (Place fresh herbs inside the cavity for whole trout along with a slice of lemon and a pat of butter.)

Once the trout is completely smoked you have a tasty meal. You can eat them just the way they are, or you can use the smoked trout almost like smoked salmon as an appetizer or an ingredient in other dishes.

Smoked trout can be frozen for months or refrigerated for days, but remember that this fish isn't preserved and if you don't do something with it right away then you need to refrigerate it. If you plan to freeze the smoked trout I recommend removing not only the bones but the skin as well. You should keep only the meat of the smoked trout to freeze it.