

 Seasonal cook


Photo: Edwina Pickles

The perfect cure

Hot or cold, fish smoked the traditional way is hard to beat, writes STEVE MANFREDI.

Smoking fish is a method of preserving that is almost as old as civilisation. While we have no problem keeping food fresh these days with modern refrigerators and freezers, the taste of properly preserved, smoked fish is an exotic delicacy.

I added "properly preserved" because there are modern, industrial short cuts in the smoking process that are cost-effective but don't come close to the real thing.

There are two main ways of smoking fish: cold and hot.

Cold smoking involves curing the fish first, usually using salt only or a combination of salt and sugar. The fish fillets are left in contact with the cure for a few hours, then washed and put

into a smoking chamber separate from the smoke-generating heat source.

The cold smoke is fed into the chamber via a pipe for an extended period. The fish is cured rather than cooked.

Hot smoking can begin with curing but it's not necessary. The fish fillets are hung in a smoking chamber that also contains the source of heat and smoke. This is a quicker method but it's important to control the temperature and timer ratio.

Cold-smoked fish is used at room temperature, while the hot-smoked can be cooked, but only a little.

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SPAGHETTINI WITH HOT-SMOKED SALMON AND VEGETABLES

This dish calls for hot-smoked salmon, but hot-smoked river trout, kingfish or mackerel can be used instead. It could also be interesting with smoked mussels or oysters.

150g hot-smoked salmon
2 zucchini
1 carrot
1 small leek
12 cherry tomatoes, each halved
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
½ cup dry white wine
½ cup parsley, chopped
Salt and pepper
500g spaghetti (thin spaghetti)

Tear smoked salmon into bite-sized pieces and set aside. Wash and dry vegetables. Cut zucchini, carrot and leek into fine Julienne. Heat olive oil in a pan and lightly fry julienned vegetables for 1 minute until they're soft. Add cherry tomatoes and white wine. Simmer for 2 minutes more. Add salmon pieces and parsley, season to taste and stir well. Cook spaghetti "al dente", drain and toss with salmon and vegetable sauce. Divide onto plates and serve immediately.

Serves 6 as a first course (pictured)

Wine Lightly wooded chardonnay

SMOKED SALMON, ORANGE AND RADISH SALAD

Adapted from Thomas Keller's *Bouchon*.

½ cup fresh orange juice
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tsp sherry vinegar
1 tsp salt
Salt and pepper
2 navel oranges
2 cups tender centre of curly endive lettuce (or your favourite lettuce)
40 tarragon leaves
40 flat-leaf parsley leaves
40 chervil leaves
1 heaped tsp minced chives
2-4 radishes, sliced to get 24 rounds
12 slices smoked salmon

Simmer juice until reduced to 2 tbsp. Make vinaigrette by whisking together reduced juice, vinegar and olive oil.

Season to taste. Cut off top and bottom of oranges. Stand orange and cut away peel and pith in wide strips. Cut between the membranes to release segments.

Squeeze juice from membranes over segments. Place endive in a bowl with herbs, lightly dress with vinaigrette, add radish slices, season and toss. Arrange three salmon slices in centre of four plates and drizzle with a little olive oil and orange juice. Mount salad in centre and arrange orange segments around.

Serves 4 as a first course

Wine Gruner veltliner

 Full bottle

QUAFFING

BODEGAS ARGUESO
SAN LEON MANZANILLA,
\$17, 375ml

Manzanilla is a special fino sherry from the Sanlúcar de Barrameda part of the Andalucía region in southern Spain where the Guadalquivir river meets the Atlantic Ocean.

There is a distinct sea-salty character to manzanilla, which adds to the bracing, mouth-watering allure, along with a hint of camomile. This is as dry as the beach along the river and super fresh but it's been gaining depth and complexity for about seven years in barrel. Goes brilliantly with garlicky prawns. Serve well chilled.



CELLARING

FELSINA BERARDENGA
CHIANTI CLASSICO
2009, \$45

It might sound silly to say a Tuscan producer is fanatical about sangiovese because that variety lies at the very heart of the region. Yet this applies to Felcina because its Chianti classico is 100 per cent sangiovese rather than being the dominant blend. This fragrant red is savoury and complex, with tar, tobacco leath, ferrous and roasted tomato notes alongside langy red fruits. It's medium weighted with super-taut tannins and plenty of mouth-watering acidity – an essential partner to osso buco. Give it lots of air. Better still, put it away for a few years.



CELEBRATING

DOMINIQUE PORTET BRUT
ROSE NON-VINTAGE, \$28

Dominique Portet, who is based in the Yarra Valley and uses fruit sourced from that region, always produces a delightful, chery non-vintage rosé. It has an enticing pale on-skin hue and, being a dry, fresh style, it's just-right as an aperitif. It's pretty on the nose, with its aroma of red berries – especially strawberries – and it has some spice, too. This is not a fruity wine and while it's not overly complex, it has a fine savorly edge and creamy mouthfeel.

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