

EVERYTHING SALMON

Salmon Prep 101

Remove Pinbones

When a fish is filleted, the flesh is removed from the backbone and ribs, but the relatively soft, thin, needle-like pinbones, also known as intermuscular bones, are not attached to the main skeleton and thus must be removed in a second step. While most fish are sold with the pinbones removed, they are difficult to see and are sometimes missed by the fishmonger. When preparing recipes like our Oven-Roasted Salmon or Poached Salmon with Herb Vinaigrette, it's always a good idea to check for bones before cooking.



1. Drape fillet over inverted mixing bowl to help any pinbones protrude. Then, working from head end to tail end, locate pinbones by running your fingers along length of fillet.
2. Use tweezers to grasp tip of bone. To avoid tearing flesh, pull slowly but firmly at slight angle in direction bone is naturally pointing rather than straight up. Repeat until all pinbones are removed.

To Skin or not to Skin?

We use skin-on salmon fillets in our Oven-Roasted Salmon recipe; the skin helps shield the flesh from the high heat environment. But for the more gentle, even cooking of our Poached Salmon recipe, skinned salmon works best. You can ask your fishmonger to do the skinning for you, or you can follow these steps to do it yourself.



1. Using tip of boning knife (or sharp chef's knife), begin to cut skin away from fish at corner of fillet.



2. When enough skin is exposed, grasp skin firmly with piece of paper towel, hold taut, and carefully slice flesh off skin.

Get Ready to Roast

After trimming any belly fat and portioning the salmon into individual fillets, we score the skin to allow the ample fat between the skin and flesh to render, or melt, as it roasts.



1. Hold a sharp knife at a slight downward angle to the flesh and cut off the whitish, fatty portion of the belly.



2. Cut the salmon fillet into four pieces of equal size to help ensure that they cook at the same rate.



3. Make four or five shallow slashes along the skin side of each piece of fish, being careful not to cut into the flesh.

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Essential Equipment

Use the Right Tool

Fish spatulas—elongated versions of the standard pancake flipper—are designed expressly for shimmying underneath delicate fillets. And we've found no better tool for extracting sticky vegetables from a baking sheet or transferring fresh-baked pastries from oven to cooling rack. That is, if you get your hands on a good one. A well-designed spatula combines ample strength for scraping up sticky food bits with enough pliability to sneak underneath delicate foods virtually unnoticed.



Our favorite, the Wüsthof Gourmet Slotted Turner/Fish Spatula, is sturdy yet nimble, with an arced blade that sports a comfortable handle and is ideal for moving anything from fish fillets to vegetables and cookies.

Do No Harm

While a fish spatula may be the perfect tool for flipping fish, its thin metal edges will easily scratch a nonstick pan. We wanted to find a good substitute that was flexible yet firm, thin enough to slide between the flesh and skin, and friendly to our nonstick pans. We tested 10 plastic spatulas, eliminating 5 in the first round. In the end, we flipped for the sleek agility and gently cradled head of our winner, which performed well beyond its piscine job description and vastly outperformed the rest of the pack. This tool is essential to our everyday cooking arsenal.



Matfer Bourgeat Pelton Spatula is comfortable from any angle; this spatula boasts a thin front edge and moderately flexible head with a slight upward tilt that kept food secure. Our only complaint was that it melted slightly at 380 degrees, despite the manufacturers' claims that it was heat resistant to 430 degrees.