

Sea-trout recipes

When I began to collect recipes for sea-trout I asked almost everyone I met in Ireland how they would prefer to prepare a freshly-caught 1lb. sea-trout. ‘Fry it in butter,’ said Mary O’Donnell. ‘Fry it in butter,’ said the chef somewhere starry. ‘Fry it in butter,’ said Anne Donnelly. ‘Fry it in butter,’ said....well, said everyone else. The first recipe, therefore, is simply...

Recipe A.

Fry it in butter.

I can get through a 1lb. sea-trout fairly easily at a sitting, but a 2lb. fish beats me – it is more suitable for two sharing. If you wish, the skin of the sea-trout may be dusted with flour before frying: this makes the flesh crisper. During frying, it’s important not to let the butter burn. I also baste the fish during the cooking process. Check that the fish is done while it’s still in the pan. I run a knife down the lateral line of the fish and peer inside the opened flesh: if the flesh is coming away from the backbone then the trout is cooked.

Recipe B. Ken’s sea-trout

Share as a hot or cold breakfast dish or as a starter for a main course.

Clean one sea-trout – a 12oz.-1lb. fish is enough for two people

1. Line the base of a cooking pot with strong, raw sea-salt
2. Make horizontal cuts into the flesh, onto but not through the backbone. Place the fish on top of the sea-salt.
3. Cover the fish in boiled water (NB. Not ‘boiling’ water, but water that has already boiled)
4. Add 2 bay leaves
5. Simmer very gently for 7 minutes
6. Take off the simmer. The fish can be left to cool in the cooking liquid if wished.

Ken tells me that this recipe is also excellent for salmon (cut the salmon into steaks), and that salmon thus cooked may be served with hollandaise sauce.

Recipe C. Chris’s sea-trout

Share as a cold starter.

One 1lb. sea-trout is enough to make four small smoked portions.

1. Clean the sea-trout, leaving on the head. Make diagonal cuts into the flesh (onto but not through the backbone) and rub the flesh with sea-salt and some coarse brown sugar.
2. Fire up a fish smoker, lining the smoking tray with oak chips.
3. Place the fish onto the grid that sits above the smoking tray.
4. Close the lid of the smoker.
5. Leave the fish in the smoker till the fire under the smoker goes out. Resist the temptation to open the lid of the smoke-box. Do not hover uselessly: go away and do something else.
6. When the fire's out, remove the fish from the grid.
7. Clean the smoker.

Serve with brown toast, lemon wedges and parsley.

Smoking is also a wonderful way of cooking salmon, pike fillets and (in particular) zander. Once smoked, the fish-flesh may be flaked and mixed with a touch of mayonnaise, salt and pepper and some herbs from the garden. Thereafter it can be served warm or (better) cold on brown toast.