

# TRAEGER TALK



## SIMPLE SALMON

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Salmon is a delicious and versatile fish that can be main course or appetizer. It's great served hot or cold. Fresh wild caught salmon is always great, but today we can choose from wonderful farmed options. Today's farmed salmon is a long way from the farmed salmon of 20 years ago. Today, it is sustainable, healthy, delicious and easy to cook.

We will start by buying a whole skin-on fillet. Most stores cut the fillets into fifths or smaller for the display case. That practice mystifies me. I always want to present a whole side of the fish if I can. A slab fillet looks festive and everyone gets to choose the size of their serving without having to leave an undersized remainder. Just ask at the meat counter if they have any full fillets in the back.



Sprinkle the Kosher salt over the fillet. It's best if you can do this the night before, but you can do it right before smoking and it will be fine. Follow the salt with coarse ground black pepper and garlic granules. Avoid fine salt, fine pepper and garlic powder. They are all difficult to control and easy to overdo. If you accidentally dump too much spice in one spot, you can use extra virgin olive oil to help spread it evenly.

The olive oil adds a nice flavor, but blocks some of the smoke. It's your choice which way to go.

Your next choice is whether you want a heavy smoke or light. In normal operation, the Traeger produces the most desirable smoke: thin, blue, and sweet. However, if you like a heavy smoke, during startup the Traeger produces white creosote smoke that some people like. It's up to you whether you put the fish in the grill before starting or after the grill gets up to temperature.

Place the salmon, skin down, directly on the grates. The grill should be set to Smoke, or the lowest temperature setting available. For some grills, that's 165°F, for some it's 180°F. USDA standard for food safety is 145°F for fish. Individual taste always varies, and some may prefer theirs a little more done, and some may want to take a small chance and eat theirs at a medium-rare 125°F, but 145°F is probably the best starting point.

Insert your temperature probes in the thickest part of the fillet and wait until the Internal Temperature (IT) is 145°F. That's it! Salmon cooks fast, less than 45 minutes for a 2.7 pound fillet, so you won't have to wait as long as you would for a steak. At 145°F, the meat will be very tender. If you like it more done, try a few degrees hotter.

If you want something more elegant and extravagant, a wonderful addition to salmon is a special dill-infused hollandaise sauce. Fresh dill fronds can be added directly to the sauce, but it alters the texture in a way you may not like. By extracting dill flavor in a tea made from either dried or fresh dill, the texture change can be avoided. This can be done with some other herbs, but dill is more heat resistant than some and works very well with salmon.



Soften, but do not melt, the butter in a double boiler and add the egg yolks. Whisk constantly over medium heat until the mixture begins to thicken slightly, then add a teaspoon or so of the very hot dill tea. Continue to whisk and add the water a teaspoon at a time each time the mixture thickens. After all the tea is added, you will see the hot mixture begin to look as if it is separating slightly. That means it's time to slowly add the lemon juice. Remove the sauce from heat and stir in the white pepper and cayenne. Taste the sauce and adjust the pepper to suit your taste. This sauce is stable enough to be refrigerated and reheated. If you reheat too much, it may separate, but if this happens, you only need to add a bit of lemon juice or vinegar to reintegrate it.



### Salmon Ingredients:

- 2.7 pounds Whole fillet of Salmon
- 1 tablespoon Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon Black pepper, coarse ground
- 1 tablespoon Garlic granules, coarse
- 1 teaspoon Paprika
- 2 tablespoons Olive Oil (optional)
- 1 teaspoon Dill, fronds only, for garnish



### Hollandaise Sauce Ingredients:

- 6 tablespoons Butter
- 1/3 cup Boiling Water, will reduce to 1/4 cup when tea is made
- 3 Egg Yolks
- 2 tablespoons Dill, chopped
- 2 teaspoons Lemon Juice
- 1/8 teaspoon White Pepper
- 1/16 teaspoon Cayenne Pepper

