INDIRECT · ADVANCED

Guajillo-cured smoked salmon, low indirect

A 900 g salmon fillet, 24 hours dry-cured in Maldon salt, brown sugar, ground guajillo and dill. Smoked at 130°C with apple and cherry. Silky texture and a spicy crust.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
1440 min	**90 min**	**6**	**130 °C**

Ingredients

- **1 ud** fresh salmon fillet with skin (800 g - 1 kg)
- **80 g** brown sugar
- **1 manojo** fresh dill, chopped
- **1 trozo** cherry wood chunk
- **1 pizca** freshly ground black pepper
- **100 g** Maldon flaky sea salt
- **2 cda** ground guajillo chile (imported from Mexico)
- **2 trozos** apple wood chunks (not chips)
- **2 cda** extra-virgin olive oil DOP (Comunidad Valenciana)

Method

1 MIX THE CURE

In a bowl combine Maldon salt, brown sugar, ground guajillo and chopped dill until evenly integrated. The ratio is roughly 55% salt, 45% sugar — sugar tempers the bite of salt and balances the guajillo heat.

2 PACK THE SALMON

Check the salmon is pin-bone free (tweezers if needed). Lay the fillet on a tray over a rack (critical: not in direct contact with the dish — the water it releases must drain). Pack the cure mix over and under, generous and even.

3 CURE 24H IN THE FRIDGE

Cover with cling film and refrigerate for 24 hours. At the 12-hour mark drain accumulated water from the tray and flip the salmon. After 24 hours the fillet should have changed colour (darker, almost translucent) and released a fair amount of moisture.

4 RINSE AND DRY

Take the salmon out and rinse under cold tap water for about 30 seconds per side to remove excess cure. Otherwise the dish ends up too salty. Pat dry thoroughly with paper towels — surface completely dry.

5 PELLICLE 2-4 HOURS

Place the salmon on a clean rack and leave it uncovered in the fridge for at least 2 hours, ideally 4. A sticky, glossy layer (pellicle) forms — it is what locks the smoke onto the fish. No pellicle, no real smoke.

6 STABILISE AT 130°C

Light only one zone of charcoal (Minion method) and stabilise the kamado at 130°C indirect with the deflector. When the chamber holds for 10 minutes without drifting, add the apple and cherry chunks. Wait until the smoke runs clean and blue, not thick white.

7 SMOKE LOW AND STEADY

Lay the salmon on the grate skin side down. Sink the probe into the thickest part of the fillet. Cook until the probe reads 60°C internal — 80 to 90 minutes. Do not open the lid, do not add more wood during the smoke.

8 PROBE AT 60°C, PULL

The moment the probe hits 60°C internal, lift the salmon with a wide spatula (better two paddles or a fish spatula — the fillet is delicate). Do not poke with a fork. Temperature will carry over another 2-3°C during the rest.

9 REST AND SERVE

Rest 10 minutes at room temperature. Move to a board, slice thinly (yes, peeling at a diagonal off the knife). Serve on toast with fresh cheese (cream-style or mild goat), a drizzle of DOP oil and freshly ground pepper. Leftovers: wrapped in wax paper in the fridge, 3-4 days.

Editor's tips

- The pellicle is not optional or a flourish. It is chemistry: the dry protein surface creates binding sites for smoke compounds. Skip this step and you burn wood without transferring flavour — the salmon turns out smoke-cooked, not smoked.
- Mild woods for fish: apple, cherry, peach, alder. Strong woods (mesquite, hickory, oak) are made for beef and pork and taste ashy on salmon. If hickory is all you have, use only a small piece and keep it well away from the fillet.
- 60°C internal is the ceiling, not the floor. Push past it and the salmon dries irreversibly — the silky texture turns into stiff slabs. Without a probe this dish is Russian roulette. Inkbird or Meater, whatever you have.
- Cure time: 24 hours minimum, 36 hours maximum. Under 24 and the salt does not penetrate; over 36 and the salmon turns into a salty ham. For thinner fillets (around 600 g), drop to 18 hours.
- Kamado low and steady. The ceramic holds 130°C stable on a single vent setting — this is exactly where it shines over a metal smoker. Do not touch the vents during the smoke; a 20°C swing either way ruins the curve.

Gear for this recipe

Monolith Classic Pro 2.0

mikamado.es/en/kamados/monolith-classic-pro-2-cart

Weber Apple Wood Smoking Chunks 1.5 kg

Apple wood chunks for a soft, fruity smoke on the cured salmon.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-tacos-manzano-15kg

Kamado Joe Big Block XL lump charcoal 9.1 kg

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/kamado-joe-big-block-xl-lump

MEATER Pro / 2 Plus Wireless Meat Thermometer

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/meater-pro-2-plus

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/salmon-ahumado-guajillo

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