

SALMON GRAVLAX

Curing is one of my favourite ways to enjoy the incredibly good-quality fish we're lucky enough to get here in Australia. You'll often find cured fish on the menu in various forms at Chiswick, ARIA and, of course, North Bondi Fish. Curing allows the natural flavours of the fish to shine through and it works well with almost any fish, although the oiliness of salmon is a no-brainer. I'll often make this if I'm having friends around for lunch and if there are any leftovers (unlikely!) I'll use the rest for brekky with scrambled eggs.

20 g ($\frac{3}{4}$ oz/ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) coriander seeds
50 g ($1\frac{3}{4}$ oz/ $\frac{1}{3}$ cup) black peppercorns
250 g (9 oz/ $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) rock salt
75 g ($2\frac{1}{2}$ oz/ $\frac{1}{3}$ cup) caster (superfine) sugar
1 small fennel bulb, coarsely chopped
1 lemon, coarsely chopped

1 side of salmon (about 1.3 kg/3 lb), skin-on, pin-boned
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 bunch coarsely chopped dill
Lemon wedges, crème fraîche and crusty bread, to serve

Place the coriander seeds in a small dry frying pan and dry-roast over a medium-high heat, shaking the pan occasionally, for a minute or two until fragrant. Tip into a mortar and pestle, add the peppercorns and coarsely crush.

Combine the rock salt, sugar, fennel, lemon and crushed spices in a food processor and process to a paste.

Line a baking tray or dish large enough to hold the salmon flat with plastic wrap, then spread out half the salt mixture on the plastic wrap. Score the skin side of the salmon with a sharp knife, four to five times about 5 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch) deep, then place skin-side down on top of the salt mixture. Spread the remaining salt mixture over the flesh of the salmon, wrap tightly in the plastic wrap, then in another layer of plastic wrap to prevent any leaks

(as the salmon cures the curing mixture will turn into a liquid while the moisture is drawn from the fish). Place back in the tray or dish and refrigerate for 24 hours. Turn the salmon over in the tray and refrigerate for another 24 hours to continue curing.

Unwrap the salmon and wipe off any excess curing mixture, lightly rinse under cold running water, then pat dry with paper towels. Brush the flesh of the salmon with the mustard, then scatter with the dill, lightly pressing to help it stick to the fish. Eat immediately or wrap in a fresh piece of plastic wrap and refrigerate for up to 5 days.

To serve, thinly slice the salmon with a very sharp knife across the grain of the fish and serve with lemon wedges, crème fraîche and crusty bread.