

# *Food for Brewing*

By Gerald Lester

At a recent CCHB event, I brought some “leftover” smoked salmon. After one of the regular contributors to The Hopline “sampled” it (the sample size was large enough for him to do a detailed analysis), I was requested to write an article/series about food for the Hopline – this is the first installment.

We all know that brewing takes time – as does drinking what we brewed. During that time, we are not 100% engaged in “active” activity pertaining to the brewing/drinking. I'm sure some spend the time in what others would consider “useful” activities – me, I tend to spend it in talking and eating (from the look of my waist line, maybe not in that order). So this article/series will be about foods (and recipes) that go along well with the production and consumption of beer.

“Hot” smoked salmon is a great accompaniment for brewing or drinking. It taste great either at room temperature or warmed – plus I'm told all those Omega-3 fatty acids are good for me! On the other hand, we are also supposed to consume greens for a balanced meal (the beer will provide our grain / carbohydrates and the salmon the protein), so I'm also including a recipe for smoked bacon wrapped jalapeno stuffed peppers.

To begin, we need some salmon (surprise, surprise, surprise). I used a whole filet (about 2 pounds) of sockeye salmon which I bought on sale at Rouses' for 7.99/lb. I brined the salmon for a bit over 24 hours and then smoked it in a water smoker for two hours using apple wood chunks at about 180 °F. At the same time I also smoked the bacon wrapped jalapeno stuffed peppers. To come up with the brine, I googled several recipes on the internet and combined/tweaked them to make the following recipe.

Combine the following:

- 1/2 cup Kosher Salt
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon dill
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Cut the salmon filet in half. Take the brine and apply to the flesh of the salmon. Then place the two half filets flesh side to flesh side in a zip lock bag and seal. Place that bag into another zip lock bag and seal. Place that in the refrigerator for 12 hours, then flip and leave in for another 12 hours (or so). After placing the salmon in the refrigerator, take three or four fist sized chunks of apple wood and soak in the water in the water pan of your smoker – do not change or discard the water.

Next, take the jalapenos. Cut the stem off using a food scissors. Cut the jalapenos length wise in half, clean out the seeds and membrane. Stuff with a soft cheese such as mozzarella or your favorite flavored cream cheese then wrap (in a spiral fashion) a slice of bacon around the pepper half. Place your collection of bacon wrapped jalapeno stuffed peppers into a zip lock bag and place into the refrigerator next to the salmon.

After the brining period has elapsed, take the salmon out of the zip lock bags and rinse off the excess brining mixture under flowing water. Pat the flesh dry with a paper towel and allow to rest at room temperature until a matte surface forms on the flesh (about 30 minutes).

While the salmon is resting, get your smoker ready. If you are using a charcoal smoker, fire them up – don't use too much as the cooking time is only about two hours. Remove the wood from the water bowl and allow it to “rest”.

When the salmon has a nice matte finish, place the wood on the coals/heating elements. If using an electric smoker, turn the heating element on to high. Place the water pan, containing the water use to soak

the apple wood chunks into position. Grease the grates and place the salmon skin side down on the grates. Place the bacon wrapped jalapeno stuffed peppers on the grill. Put the lid on the smoker. Adjust the vent holes to achieve a temperature of about 180 °F (on my electric smoker this was with the vents all the way open – on a charcoal smoker it should be with the vents almost all the way closed).

Walk away for two hours, have a beer or two or three.

Remove the grills from heat and let cool for at least 15 minutes. Remove the food from the grills and either serve immediately or place in ziplock bags and refrigerate (or even freeze).

If serving refrigerated salmon, allow the salmon to come up to room temperature (or heat in a microwave for about 45 seconds) before serving.

If serving refrigerated bacon wrapped jalapeno stuffed peppers, microwave in a ziplock bag for 30 seconds, then serve immediately.

According to my reading of the food pyramid, we now have a complete balanced meal as follows:

- Cereal (the barley in the beer)
- Fruit/vegetable (the jalapenos are green and technically a fruit)
- Cheese from the stuffed jalapenos
- Protein from the salmon
- Oils from the salmon and bacon

Enjoy!