

# Spiced Cold Salmon

Adapted from *Directions for Cookery in its Various Branches* by Eliza Leslie (1848)  
for the book *Cooking with Fire* (1993) by Helen Brody.

“It must be thoroughly done, as nothing is more disgusting than fish that is undercooked.”  
Mrs. A.L. Webster, 1845

“Salmon, the noblest and richest fishes taken in fresh water – the largest are the best. They are unlike almost every other fish, are ameliorated by being 3 or 4 days out of the water, if kept from the heat and the moon, which has much more injurious effect than the sun.”  
Amelia Simmons, 1796

“... deceits are used to give them <fish> a freshness of appearance, such as peppering the gills, wetting the fins and tails, and even painting the gills ... .”  
Amelia Simmons, 1796

## Original Recipe:

*Take a fine fresh salmon, and having cleaned it, cut it into large pieces, and boil it in salted water as if for eating ... Then make the pickle, which must be in proportion to the quantity of fish. To one quart of the water in which the salmon was boiled, allow two quarts of the best vinegar, one ounce of whole black pepper, one ounce of whole allspice and a dozen blades of mace. Boil all these together in a kettle ... When the vinegar thus prepared is quite cold, pour it over the salmon ... cover it closely ...and it will be good for months ...Garnish with fennel.*  
Eliza Leslie, *Directions for Cookery in its Various Branches*, 1828.

## Updated Version:

6 8-ounce salmon steaks  
4 cups water (approximately)  
2 teaspoons salt

1-1/4 cup salmon poaching liquid  
1 heaping teaspoon whole black peppercorns  
1 heaping teaspoon whole allspice  
½ cup white wine vinegar

Lay salmon steaks in one layer in a 12-inch skillet. Cover with cold water. Bring water to a boil, add one teaspoon of the salt, and cover the pan. Simmer for ten minutes. Remove salmon with a slotted spatula to a glass ceramic dish large enough to hold the steaks in one layer. Reserve 1 ¼ cups poaching liquid. Cover fish with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Put reserved 1-1/4 cups of poaching liquid, peppercorns, allspice, vinegar and remaining teaspoon of salt in a non-aluminum pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for five minutes. Turn off heat and let mixture come to room temperature. Pour pickling mixture over salmon in dish, recover with plastic wrap, refrigerate. Baste fish several times while it marinates for 24 hours.

6 servings

Accompany fish with: ¼ teaspoon ground allspice, ¼ teaspoon ground cloves, and ¼ teaspoon cinnamon into one cup of lightly whipped cream.

Serve as a luncheon or a light summer supper dish.