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LOX

Noah: We use this salt-cured salmon recipe for two of our signature breakfast dishes, the Beauty (page 98) and the Mish-Mash (page 109), but it's great for all sorts of other preparations.

Curing salmon is all about the fat. We use king salmon for making lox at the deli, and always the farmed variety, not wild. That's because wild salmon tends to be too lean for curing. Too little fat will cause the salt mixture to "burn" the surface of the salmon and stop the cure from penetrating. Allowing the fillet to rest for a day after rinsing off the curing mixture enables the fish to continue "cooking" — that is, it lets the curing compounds distribute themselves evenly throughout the salmon. Using good kosher salt for this recipe is absolutely essential.

- ⅓ cup whole black peppercorns
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 1 cup Diamond Crystal kosher salt
- 1 bunch of dill
- 1 2-pound boneless king salmon fillet, with skin

Combine the peppercorns, sugar, and salt in a bowl and stir to combine. Place 2 or 3 sprigs of the dill in the bottom of a nonreactive baking dish, and sprinkle about ¼ cup of the salt mixture evenly over the bottom of the dish.

Make 2 or 3 shallow cuts in the skin of the salmon fillet. Place the salmon, skin side down, on top of the salt and dill, and place a few more sprigs of dill on top of the salmon. Sprinkle the salmon all over with another ¼ cup of the salt mixture. Reserve the remaining salt mixture. Loosely cover the baking dish with plastic wrap and refrigerate it overnight.

Carefully pour off any liquid that has accumulated in the baking dish. Add another ¼ cup of the salt mixture to the bottom of the dish, and sprinkle ¼ cup more over the salmon. Replace the dill sprigs with new ones if they've wilted. Cover the dish and refrigerate overnight.

Repeat this process 2 more times over 2 more days.

On the fifth day, remove the salmon, rinse it thoroughly, and pat it dry with paper towels. Place the salmon on a small drying rack set inside a clean baking dish or over a couple of layers of paper towels. Refrigerate, uncovered, overnight.

To serve, slice very thinly and carefully at a shallow angle, working from the front of the fillet toward the tail.

MAKES ABOUT 1½ POUNDS



MATZO

Rae: You'd think more people would make their own matzo instead of buying it in a box—the recipe couldn't be simpler, and come on, it's the star of the Passover story. I use our homemade matzo instead of crackers all the time for snacks and hors d'oeuvres. How many pieces of matzo you get from this recipe will depend on how practiced you are at rolling and trimming the dough.

- 4¼ cups sifted all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 1 teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt, plus more to top the matzo (optional)
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon warm water

Preheat the oven to 500°F and place a pizza stone (ideally) or a 10-by-15-inch baking sheet on the bottom rack.

In a large bowl, mix together all the ingredients until they come together to form a dough. If the dough is sticky, add a bit more flour.

Divide the dough into 8 pieces. Flatten a piece slightly and pass it repeatedly through a pasta maker, reducing the thickness each time until you reach the minimum setting. (Or you can simply roll the dough as thinly as possible with a rolling pin.) Repeat with the remaining dough pieces.

Trim the flattened dough pieces so that they will fit snugly onto the pizza stone or baking sheet. Use a fork to prick holes in the surface of the dough. For salted matzo, brush or spray the dough surface lightly with water and sprinkle with salt.

Carefully slide the pieces of dough onto the pizza stone or baking sheet. Bake until the surface of the matzo is golden brown and bubbly, 30 seconds or so. Using tongs, carefully flip the matzo pieces and continue to bake until the other side is browned and lightly blistered. (Keep careful, constant watch to keep the matzo from burning; the exact cooking time will vary from oven to oven, and will get a little longer with each subsequent batch.)

MAKES ABOUT 8 LARGE SHEETS

