

PURCHASING SALMON

Shopping for salmon can be confusing. Add in the misinformation traversing social media, and the constant opinions shared by influencers, pundits, and NGOs, and confusion can arise. Regardless of opinions, salmon is a juggernaut, and consumers need guidelines and reassurance at the seafood counter of their local store.

Fillets and, to a lesser extent, steaks are the most common forms of salmon purchased at retail in the US. Thus, finding and buying high-quality salmon is not difficult but does require some thought. Purchasing whole fish is a bit more complicated but far less frequent unless in commercial food service.

FRESH SALMON

When purchasing fresh salmon, take a close look at the fillet itself: It should be vibrant, moist, and firm, never dull, dry, or flaking apart. Next, the smell is crucial; a truly fresh fillet has a clean, subtle scent of the ocean, not an overpowering or ammoniated “fishy” smell. The skin should be bright and scales intact, if present.

The most important considerations when buying fresh salmon:

VIBRANT APPEARANCE AND MOISTURE: Seek bright, consistent color and visibly moist, firm flesh without any browning, gaping, or other signs of dehydration.

CLEAN AROMA: A subtle, fresh, oceanic scent is paramount; the absence of any strong, unpleasant odors is always your best guarantee of freshness.

FROZEN SALMON

When shopping for salmon in the freezer case, packaging is your first clue to quality: It must be tightly vacuum-sealed with no tears or signs of freezer burn (excessive ice inside, white patches on the fish). Look for terms like “IQF” (Individually Quick Frozen), which indicates rapid freezing at peak freshness.

The most important considerations when buying frozen salmon:

PACKAGING INTEGRITY AND FREEZING METHOD:

Look for perfectly vacuum-sealed packages with minimal or no ice crystals inside. Seek out “IQF” (Individually Quick Frozen) on the label; this process is key to preserving texture and flavor during freezing.

ABSENCE OF FREEZER BURN: Visually inspect the fish through the packaging for a vibrant color without white spots, discoloration, or a dried-out appearance, all tell-tale signs of freezer burn that compromises quality.

WHOLE FRESH SALMON

When purchasing whole fresh salmon, examine the fish for clear eyes, bright red gills, shiny skin, firm flesh, and a clean, subtle ocean smell—signs of peak freshness.

The most important considerations when buying fresh whole salmon:

EYES: Bulging, shiny, bright, and clear (not cloudy)

GILLS: Bright red, firm, not slimy or broken

SHINY SKIN: Bright and clear with no fading or dry spots

FIRM FLESH: Skin and flesh firm to the touch

SMELL: Fresh, mild, slight scent of ocean (not fishy), free of ammonia

COMMON RETAIL CUTS OF SALMON

WHOLE FILLET OR SIDE: Refers to an entire half of a salmon with the head, tail, and spine removed. A side of salmon usually includes the skin and may have pinbones toward the thicker (head end) of the fillet. The size of a side of salmon depends on the species: king and Atlantic salmon can range from 2 to 4 pounds per side. Coho and rainbow trout are between 1½ to 3 pounds, and sockeye salmon can be even smaller, averaging 1 to 2 pounds per side. I like purchasing a frozen, vacuum-packaged side of salmon for value.

FILLET PORTIONS: There are three smaller cuts of salmon taken from the side of the fish. These are the most common cuts found at grocery most grocery stores.

1. LOIN: A larger, thicker cut from the top-middle of the fillet

2. BELLY: Comes from the thin, tapered belly side of the fillet and has a higher fat content

3. TAIL: The smallest and thinnest part of the fillet taken from the tail end of the side, just before the adipose fin all the way to the end where the tail was

ADDITIONAL CUTS

CENTER-CUT PORTION: This generally refers to a salmon portion from the premium part of the fillet, including the thicker part of the loin and a portion of the belly flap.

STEAKS: This is a cross-sectional cut of a salmon, perpendicular to the spine. It includes a section of the backbone, and sometimes even the belly cavity. It's shaped like a round steak, hence the name. These are best for grilling, broiling, and pan-searing. Steaks that are 1½ inches thick handle better, are easier to cook, and are more forgiving when preparing. If the steaks are too thin, they tend to break apart when transferring from the grill to a plate.

When cooking larger steaks, you can split the steak after cooking and serve half a steak per person. One final note: Steaks contain all bones including the backbone and pinbones. Be extremely careful when serving steaks and watch for bones as you eat.

STORING YOUR SALMON FOR PEAK FRESHNESS

Proper storage of fresh and frozen salmon is paramount to preserving quality. The key principle is temperature: Whether fresh or frozen, keep the fish at the right temperature. For fresh salmon, 32°F is ideal.

Your home refrigerator is probably warmer than 32°F, so you will want to take steps to keep your fish chilled. If it is wrapped in paper, remove the salmon; this paper can absorb moisture and isn't ideal for storage. Gently pat the fish dry with paper towels. This removes surface moisture, which helps preserve texture. Next, wrap the salmon tightly in plastic wrap, pressing out any air. Place the salmon in an airtight container. I have a small plastic storage container with a tight lid just for our salmon. Store it in the coldest part of your refrigerator—usually the back of the bottom shelf. For optimal storage, place a small frozen gel pack sealed in a zip-top bag on the salmon fillet before you close the container. This creates a microclimate closer to that ideal 32°F temperature. Remember, fresh salmon is highly perishable; plan to cook it within 1 to 3 days of purchase. If the salmon is vacuum-sealed, keep it in its packaging.

If you need to store salmon longer, freezing is the way to go. For the best quality, freeze your salmon quickly and keep it frozen solid at 0°F or below. Vacuum sealing before freezing is the gold standard, as it removes nearly all air. Alternatively, wrap the portion tightly in plastic wrap followed by a layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil, or place in a freezer-safe bag, squeezing out all excess air. Properly frozen salmon maintains good quality for up to 3 months.

COOKING TEMPERATURES & PROPER DONENESS

Salmon is finicky and requires precision when it comes to temperature and doneness. My recommendation for doneness is always medium, with a moist and pink center. Using this as a guide, the ideal temperature to achieve medium doneness varies slightly for each salmon species—for wild salmon it's 122°F and for farmed 124°F. Keep in mind that this temperature range doesn't square up with what food-safety experts suggest.

According to the FDA, fish like salmon should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145°F. This temperature is considered the minimum necessary to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and to kill harmful bacteria, but any fish cooked to this temperature will be more than "well done." Salmon cooked to 145°F will be firm, dry, and far less palatable. Cooking salmon to a lower temperature does come with some risk, but the risks can be reduced through careful purchase, handling, and preparation.

I've tested and cooked all types of species, forms, and cuts to determine the ideal cook temperature (based on preference). Full disclosure: I love salmon that is just barely cooked in the center, when it is still juicy and succulent but flakes when cut. For me, this is the ideal sensory pleasure.

Wild salmon has a different muscle structure and is leaner than farmed salmon, so it should be cooked to a lower temperature; farmed is far more fatty and has a more tender flesh, so it can be cooked to a slightly higher temperature. The key rule of thumb: Don't overcook your expensive wild salmon. Keep an eye on it like a killer whale while it cooks. Pull it from the heat right when it turns past 122°F in the middle. Let it

rest for a few minutes and enjoy. Farmed salmon is more forgiving. You can bring it up to a higher internal temperature and it will keep its desirable qualities. It doesn't require as much attention, though you don't want to allow the internal temperature to move past 124°F before pulling it from the heat. It also goes without saying: Get yourself a really good instant-read digital thermometer and use it.

FOR WILD SALMON

The ideal cook temperature is 122°F.

RARE (110°F): Rare (mostly raw) salmon will have slightly translucent flesh and will be soft and raw in the center—similar to the tataki recipe on page 201.

MEDIUM-RARE (120 TO 122°F): Salmon cooked medium-rare will be firm on the outside and slightly opaque, with a barely raw and succulent center. It's also deliciously moist throughout. This is the preferred doneness for wild salmon.

MEDIUM (125 TO 130°F): Medium-cooked salmon is firmer to the touch and has a pink and moist center that is no longer rare.

MEDIUM-WELL (135 TO 140°F): Salmon cooked medium-well is firmer, with a lighter, slightly dry center.

WELL-DONE (145°F OR ABOVE): The salmon is now quite firm with no pink color left in the center. It is dry and flaky.

FOR FARMED SALMON

The ideal cook temperature is 124°F.

RARE (115°F): Rare (mostly raw) salmon will have translucent flesh and will be soft and silky-smooth in the center—similar to the tataki recipe on page 201.

MEDIUM-RARE (124 TO 126°F): Medium-rare salmon will turn slightly opaque with a soft texture. It's also deliciously moist throughout. This is my preferred doneness for farmed salmon.

MEDIUM (130 TO 135°F): Salmon cooled until medium is fully opaque. It is firmer to the touch and has a slightly pink center.

MEDIUM-WELL (135 TO 140°F): Medium-well salmon is firmer yet with a lighter pink center when cooked. It's also less moist compared to medium salmon.

WELL-DONE (145°F OR ABOVE): The salmon is now quite firm with no pink color left in the center.

NOTE: The USDA recommends avoiding consumption of raw or rare (undercooked) fish, including salmon, and suggests a minimum cook temperature of 145°F. If you do consume undercooked fish, make sure it is sashimi-grade, previously deep-frozen, to reduce bacterial risk.

PRE-SALT BEFORE YOU COOK

Chefs are always trying to find a better, more efficient way to increase deliciousness. Lightly salting fish before cooking is one of those methods. I use it all the time, and it always makes the end result better. I use it for almost every protein I cook as it works regardless of species. Keep in mind, pre-salting in this sense is different from seasoning with salt. Pre-salting is done to improve the protein prior to cooking and serving. Salting to season is done during and at the end of cooking to perfect flavor and balance.

There are many names for the method: salting, pre-salting, salt-curing, and short-curing.

Or you can call it what it is: salting. Why is salting so beneficial? It all has to do with diffusion and osmosis. You can look into these two processes in more detail on your own. However, when it comes to salmon, the results are fantastic.

HOW SALTING, BRINING, OR SALT-CURING HELPS

IMPROVES FLAVOR: Salt, a salt-curing mix, or a brine infuses the salmon with flavor and helps to season it throughout.

REDUCES ALBUMIN PURGE: Albumin is the white stuff that sometimes oozes out of salmon when you cook it. Albumin is a protein that's trapped between the muscle fibers of the fish. When heated, these fibers contract and squeeze out the albumin. It's not harmful, nor does it impact flavor, but it's not the most appetizing thing to look at. You can always remove it with a spoon before serving. Salting, whether dry or in a wet brine, helps to break down some of these muscle fibers. This means they won't tighten as much when cooked, and less albumin gets pushed out. The result is a cleaner, better-looking product.

REDUCES PAN SPLATTER: Salting draws out moisture, which, in turn, reduces water purge and splatter during cooking. Salted portions cook with less mess and perform better in the pan. They tend not to stick for the same reason—there's less water purging into the pan, disrupting the cooking process, and causing the surface of the fish to stick.

IMPROVES TEXTURE: Salting can help to firm up the texture of the fish, making it juicier. The salt causes the fish to lose water while also binding some of the water that is left within the muscle, so the end result is moist and succulent. That's a win-win.

IMPROVES PRESERVATION: The salt acts as a preservative due to the reduction of available water in the fillet, inhibiting bacterial growth and extending shelf life.



BAKED SALMON WITH POLENTA & BRAISED FENNEL

SERVES 4 * COOK TO 122°F FOR WILD, 124°F FOR FARMED, OR TO DESIRED DONENESS

One 1-pound
skinless, boneless
salmon fillet, cut
into 4 portions

2 teaspoons sea salt,
plus more to taste

2 teaspoons freshly
ground black pepper,
plus more to taste

¼ cup extra-virgin
olive oil, plus more
for drizzling

½ cup organic dry
polenta cornmeal
(preferably Bob's
Red Mill)

2 cups low-sodium
chicken broth or
water, plus more
as needed

1 bulb fennel, cored
and thinly sliced

1 medium shallot,
julienned

¼ cup dry white wine

1 fresh shaved
fennel bulb,
1 sautéed shallot,
mustard greens, red
Russian kale, and
fennel fronds for
garnish (optional)

4. In a medium sauté pan, add the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and warm over medium heat. Add the fennel and stir. Sauté for 1 to 2 minutes, until slightly softened. Add the shallot, sauté for another 1 to 2 minutes, then add the wine and cook until the fennel is tender and lightly braised, about 10 minutes. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.

5. Meanwhile, bake the salmon for about 10 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a fillet is 122°F for wild, 124°F for farmed, or the fish is cooked to desired doneness. Rest the salmon on a plate for 3 to 4 minutes.

6. To serve, check the polenta for texture. If too thick, place it over low heat and stir in a bit more broth or water until creamy and smooth. Spoon polenta onto each of four serving plates. Place the braised fennel next to the polenta and top with a salmon portion. If desired, garnish with a small salad.

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F.

2. Place the salmon on a baking sheet lined with foil. Season the salmon with 2 teaspoons salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil; set aside.

3. Place 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a medium saucepan set over medium heat. Add the cornmeal and lightly toast, stirring occasionally. Add the broth and bring to a simmer. Allow to simmer 12 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the broth is absorbed. Turn the heat off and cover. Let it rest on the stovetop for another 5 minutes. The moisture will continue to absorb.

Polenta is fabulous and easy to prepare, and I encourage more home cooks to try it. It's just cornmeal and liquid cooked until reconstituted, and you can find good-quality cornmeal at most supermarkets. If you are highly committed like me, an amazing option is to purchase late-season fresh sweet corn at your local farmers market and make your own cornmeal by shaving off the kernels and drying them in a dehydrator before processing into meal in a dedicated burr grinder (typically used for coffee beans). My homemade late-season sweet cornmeal makes the best polenta and reminds me of summer during winter meals.

BAKED SALMON WITH APPLE-WALNUT SALAD

SERVES 4 * COOK TO 122°F FOR WILD, 124°F FOR FARMED, OR TO DESIRED DONENESS

1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup thinly shaved red onion
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves	1 tablespoon tarragon leaves, coarsely chopped, plus 1 tablespoon leaves for garnish
1 pinch paprika	1 tablespoon dried cranberries, chopped
Four 3-ounce skinless, boneless salmon fillets	1 Honeycrisp apple, cored and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chunks
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnut halves	1 medium cucumber, peeled and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chunks
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for coating	Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard	4 cups (about 2 ounces) baby salad greens (spring greens, kale, chard)
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup balsamic vinegar	
1 tablespoon roasted shallot (see Note)	

1. Combine the 1 teaspoon salt, thyme, and paprika in a small bowl. Place the salmon on a plate and sprinkle with the salt mixture. Refrigerate, covered, for up to 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
3. Spread the walnuts out on a baking sheet in a single layer. Bake for 6 to 8 minutes until lightly toasted and golden brown. Transfer the walnuts to a bowl to cool, then coarsely chop.

During autumn, our local CSA offers seven different varieties of apples, and I've tried them all. My favorite apple for this recipe is a fresh-picked Honeycrisp—for the flavor and texture. Salmon marries well with the bright flavor of Honeycrisp apples and toasted walnuts. However, you can substitute any kind of apple and nut you prefer. I've made this with Granny Smiths (also Red Delicious) and toasted hazelnuts, too.

4. Place the salmon fillets on a foil-lined baking sheet coated with olive oil and bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a fillet is 122°F for wild, 124°F for farmed, or the fish is cooked to desired doneness. Cool to room temperature.
5. To prepare the dressing, place the Dijon mustard in a large bowl. Whisk the olive oil into the mustard in a steady stream. Continue whisking until the oil is fully incorporated and an emulsion forms. (An emulsion is when liquids that don't naturally mix, like oil and water, come together and stay that way. Mustard is the binder, and the gentle whisking is what allows the process to occur.) Whisk in the vinegar in a steady stream until incorporated. To the bowl of dressing, add three-quarters of the walnuts along with the shallot, onion, tarragon, cranberries, apple, and cucumber. Toss with a spoon until coated. Season with salt and pepper.
6. To serve, portion one cup of baby greens and approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the apple mixture into each of four plates. Top with a portion of the salmon, then sprinkle with the remaining toasted walnuts. Garnish with tarragon leaves and serve.

Note: To prepare the roasted shallot, simply peel and halve a medium shallot, place in a glass bowl, add two tablespoons olive oil, and microwave for 45 to 60 seconds. Crush with a fork and you are good to go.





CURED SALMON LOX, TOASTED FOCACCIAS & GARLICKY TOMATO DRESSING

SERVES 4 * CURE TIME: 24 HOURS

One 1-pound skin-on, boneless salmon fillet, preferably from head end	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon kosher salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Roma tomatoes, finely diced
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh dill	1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, plus more as needed
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cream cheese, at room temperature	Four 3-by-3-inch squares focaccia, lightly toasted
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup thinly sliced red onion
1 teaspoon crushed cooked garlic (see Note)	

1. Prepare the lox by lining a shallow bowl or rimmed pan with plastic wrap. Place the salmon, skin side down, on the plastic wrap and spread the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt and dill evenly over the salmon. Gently press the salt and dill into the salmon so it adheres. Cover with a second sheet of plastic wrap and place the salmon in the refrigerator to cure for 24 hours.

The word lox is derived from the Middle High German “lahs,” meaning salmon. Lox is a fillet of salmon that has been gently cured in salt. For this preparation, a one-pound skin-on portion of salmon is gently cured in kosher salt seasoned with chopped fresh dill.

2. Once cured, unwrap the salmon and rinse under ice-cold running water to remove the cure. Pat dry with paper towels. Slice the salmon against the grain as thinly as possible—from the head end toward the tail end. Angle the knife so the blade slides along the inside surface of the skin once through the thick part of the fillet. Do not cut through the skin. Detach the slice from the skin using the knife and stack the slices as you continue to cut. You will need 8 to 12 slices.

3. In a medium bowl, whisk the cream cheese, mayonnaise, garlic, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and the pepper until smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning. Add the Roma tomatoes and lemon juice. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

4. Halve the focaccia squares through the middle so you can make a sandwich. Spread some of the cream cheese mixture on the bottom piece of focaccia. Add a layer of 2 or 3 slices of the lox. Garnish with the sliced onion and cap with the focaccia top. Repeat for the remaining sandwiches and serve.

Note: To quickly cook garlic, put two or three cloves in a small microwave-safe bowl with 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil. Cover with a paper towel and microwave until tender, 45 to 60 seconds.



GRILLED SALMON WITH HONEY-MUSTARD GLAZE

SERVES 4 * COOK TO 122°F FOR WILD, 124°F FOR FARMED, OR TO DESIRED DONENESS

GLAZE

1/4 cup whole-grain mustard
2 tablespoons brown mustard
1/4 cup honey
3/4 cup plus
1 tablespoon low-sodium chicken broth
1 tablespoon diced pickled jalapeño pepper
1 teaspoon diced jalapeño pickling liquid
1 teaspoon cornstarch
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

VEGETABLES

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for coating
1 pound russet potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1. For the glaze, combine the mustards, honey, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup broth, and diced jalapeño and pickling liquid in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat. In a small bowl, combine the cornstarch with 1 tablespoon broth, stirring well, then add to the pot. Simmer until slightly thickened. Season with salt and pepper, remove from the heat, and set aside.

1 leek, thinly sliced and sautéed in olive oil until tender
1/2 red pepper, thinly sliced and sautéed in olive oil until tender
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup chicken broth
1/4 pound maitake mushrooms, pulled into pieces
2 tablespoons minced shallot
3/4 pound green beans, blanched and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces

SALMON

Four 3-ounce skin-on, boneless center-cut salmon fillets

The first secret to this dish is a properly heated electric grill. I love using one during the colder months, so long as good ventilation is available. Mine is from Starfrit and it costs less than sixty dollars—I love it. The second trick is adding pickled jalapeño to the honey-mustard glaze. It really makes a difference.

2. For the vegetables, preheat the oven to 350°F. Coat a small 6 x 8-inch baking dish with olive oil. Line the bottom of the dish with parchment paper to make removing the potatoes easier. In a large bowl, combine the potatoes, leeks, and red pepper and season with salt and black pepper. Layer the vegetable mixture in the baking dish, add the broth, and cover with foil. Bake until partially tender, about 20 minutes. Remove the foil and bake until fully cooked and golden brown, another 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool for 25 to 30 minutes, then transfer the vegetable mixture to a cutting board.

3. In a medium sauté pan over medium heat, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil. Once shimmering, add the mushrooms and shallot. Sauté until golden brown and tender. Add the green beans and cook until heated through, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

4. For the salmon, preheat an electric grill to its highest setting (usually 450°F). Season the salmon with salt, pepper, and paprika. Coat the fillets with the olive oil.

5. Grill the salmon, skin side up, for 4 to 5 minutes. Flip and continue to cook the second side for 3 to 4 minutes, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a fillet is 122°F for wild, 124°F for farmed, or the fish is cooked to desired doneness. Let the salmon rest on a plate, skin side up, for 3 to 4 minutes.

6. Cut the vegetable mixture into individual portions and place on four plates. Top with a skin side down salmon fillet. Spoon the mushrooms and beans around the salmon. Drizzle each plate with 2 to 3 tablespoons of the honey-mustard glaze before serving.



PAN-SEARED SALMON BURGER WITH SAUERKRAUT & WASABI RUSSIAN DRESSING

SERVES 4 * COOK TO 122°F FOR WILD, 124°F FOR FARMED, OR TO DESIRED DONENESS

One 12-ounce skinless, boneless salmon fillet	2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 ounces store-bought smoked salmon	½ cup Russian dressing
2 large egg yolks	¼ teaspoon prepared wasabi
1 teaspoon kosher salt	4 pretzel buns, toasted
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper	½ cup prepared sauerkraut
	4 small dill pickles or gherkins

1. On a cutting board, slice the salmon fillet and smoked salmon into strips and then into cubes, roughly chopping until the pieces are approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in size. Keep randomly chopping the fresh and smoked salmon on your cutting board to further reduce the size of the chunks. The cuts do not have to be perfect—the goal is to create a range of small and large pieces. Place the chopped salmon in an ice-cold bowl or in a bowl set over ice.

This recipe is delicious. The smoked salmon added to the burger mixture is the secret, and the wasabi adds a nice kick to the dressing. Hot pepper sauce makes a good substitute if you can't find wasabi. I use a stainless steel ring mold to shape the burger while cooking it in a cast-iron skillet. Salmon burgers are my favorite quick, easy, and healthy weeknight meal, and they are wonderful year-round.

2. Add the egg yolks to the salmon and stir vigorously using a metal spoon until the mixture starts to stick together. Season with the salt and pepper. Stir a few more times. The salmon should stick together as it starts to emulsify.

3. Heat the olive oil in a cast-iron skillet set over medium heat. Place 4 (3-inch-diameter) metal ring molds into the pan and fill the molds with the salmon mixture. Each should be around $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 ounces in size. If you don't have metal ring molds, form 4 even-size patties with your hands and place them in the pan. Cook until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Use a small spatula to carefully flip the burgers, and continue to cook until the second side is golden brown, about 4 minutes.

4. In a small bowl, combine the Russian dressing and wasabi, stirring until thoroughly combined.

5. To serve, spread the Russian dressing mixture over the surface of the bottoms and tops of each bun. Place the salmon patties on the bottom buns. Top each patty with 2 tablespoons sauerkraut (or serve it on the side), then cover with the top buns. Serve with a pickle on the side.

POACHED SALMON GINGER NORI RICE BOWL

SERVES 4

One 1-pound skinless, boneless salmon fillet, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chunks	2 scallions, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus more to taste	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded carrots
1 cup thinly sliced Swiss chard	Freshly ground black pepper
One $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and shaved paper-thin	2 cups Cooked Sushi Rice (recipe follows)
	1 sheet nori, cut into 12 pieces
	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sesame seeds

1. Put the salmon in a bowl, sprinkle with the salt, and toss to coat. Let rest for 10 minutes.
2. Place the chard, ginger, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Cook, covered, until the chard is just tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Top the chard with the salmon and cover. Cook for 5 minutes, then remove from the heat and allow to sit, covered, for 3 minutes more. Uncover, add the scallions and carrots, and toss. The heat from the salmon mixture will slightly wilt the carrots and scallion. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Divide the rice among four medium bowls. Top with the salmon mixture. Garnish each bowl with nori pieces, a drizzle of sesame oil, and some of the sesame seeds.

This dish can be made in advance and served warm or chilled. If you make a large batch, refrigerate portions for up to 3 days, making it a grab-and-go lunch option. To elevate it further, mix two tablespoons of mayonnaise with one teaspoon white miso paste and drizzle over the top. I use sharp kitchen shears to cut the nori sheets, so they are nice and fine.

COOKED SUSHI RICE

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sushi rice (see Note)	2 tablespoons rice vinegar
2 cups room-temperature water	2 teaspoons granulated sugar
1 teaspoon kosher salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried ginger powder

1. Place the rice in a fine-mesh sieve and rinse under cold running water until the water runs clear, 3 to 4 minutes. Shake to remove excess water and place the rice in a rice cooker or small saucepan. Add the water and salt. Start the rice cooker or bring the water to a boil over medium heat. Once boiling, reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the water is fully absorbed, 16 to 18 minutes. Remove from the heat.

2. In a small bowl, combine the vinegar, sugar, and ginger powder. Scoop the warm rice into a medium bowl and add the vinegar-sugar mixture. Gently toss to combine, then cool to room temperature, about 20 minutes. The rice is now ready to use. Leftover rice can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Note: I use organic sushi rice from California, which you can find at supermarkets or online.

