

Jennifer Hess's Smoked Char or Salmon Candy

Jenn says: "There are hundreds of recipes for smoked fish candy, but this one is basic and good." In order to make this at home, you'll need a smoker; I use a Bradley 4-rack model with a separate oven control. But a simpler model such as True North will also work; the temperature gets up to about 165 F (75 C).

Whichever model you use, start checking the candy after an hour to see if it's the texture you like. Jenn tends to set her oven at 120 F (50 C) and smoke the fish for an hour for a softer, more fatty texture; I set mine at 175 F (80 C) and smoke it for two hours for the chewier texture that I prefer. [Note: The food-safe recommendation is to keep the temperature at 140 F (60 C). Use your judgment.]

2 lbs. (905 gr) filet Arctic char or sockeye salmon, skin on
2 qts. (about 2 L) fresh, cold water
6½ oz. (200 mL) coarse sea salt
1 lb. (454 gr) golden yellow sugar

1. Make a brine by whisking the salt vigorously into the water until it dissolves.
2. Remove the pin bones from the fish—these are the interior bones that run along the meaty part of the fish from the head to the stomach—if you run your finger backwards from tail to head you'll feel them poking up. Needle-nosed pliers or industrial tweezers work well for this job.
3. Cut the fish into 1-inch (2-cm) cubes. Immerse the cubes in brine for 15 minutes. Drain, pat dry and transfer to a bowl.
4. Pour sugar over top and work the mixture gently with your hands, turning the fish so each piece is thoroughly coated. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours. Every couple of hours, turn the fish, bringing up the grainy sludge from the bottom of the bowl and incorporating it into the mix.
5. When you're ready to smoke, get the smoker going for 15 to 20 minutes so that the fish will go into a preheated, smoky environment.
6. Oil two fine-meshed screens (you can find these at hardware stores in the outdoor section) with a neutral oil like canola or grape seed. This step is crucial—the candy is so sticky that it adheres to the screen like glue.
7. Place screens on a couple of baking sheets to catch the drips enroute to the smoker, and arrange the pieces of salmon with space between each one.
8. Place candy in smoker, and start checking for doneness after one hour.
9. When candy is done to your liking, remove from screens while it's still hot. Cool to room temperature and store in a covered container in the fridge for up to 10 days, or freeze for up to six months. Eat with the fingers, as is.

Makes about 1 ½ lbs. (670 gr) smoked char or salmon candy.