Salmon Cream Cheese Ribbon Loaf

One three-band salmon loaf, about 4 cups (920 ml); 8 small cold seafood-starter slices · Active 1 hr · Total 13 hr

Ingredients

• Unflavored powdered gelatin, 17 g total, divided 5 g +7 g +5 g for the three layers, of specified setting strength

• 9 tablespoons cold drinking water (135 ml), divided into 3 portions of 45 ml

• 1 cup pasteurized whole milk (240 ml), divided into 2 portions of 120 ml

• 7 oz plain pasteurized full-fat cream cheese (200 g), divided into 2 portions of 100 g, kept cold

• 1 tablespoon lemon juice (15 ml), divided into 3 portions of 5 ml

• ¾ cup strained ready-to-drink tomato juice (180 ml), divided into 2 portions of 90 ml

• 5¼ oz fully cooked ready-to-eat canned salmon (150 g AFTER draining), skin and bones removed, flaked small and kept cold

• ¼ teaspoon neutral oil (1.25 ml), for wiping mold

Set out

Metal loaf mold of at least 1¼-liter capacity, Food scale reading 0.1 g for gelatin, Three small dry bowls for measured gelatin, Small saucepan washed between stages, Mixing bowls and whisk, Blender for cold cream cheese, Sieve and fork, Measuring jug, Paper towel, Food thermometer, Cold platter, Refrigerator

Allergens

Fish (salmon), Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Check mold capacity, dry and oil lightly. Weigh gelatin into separate 5 g, 7 g and 5 g portions. For first white layer, blend 100 g cream cheese with 60 ml milk until smooth. Bloom first 5 g gelatin over 45 ml cold water 5–10 minutes. Add 60 ml milk and warm gently, stirring, until dissolved, about 120–140°F (50–60°C); remove before boiling. Temper with 3 tablespoons cold cheese base, then when lukewarm whisk back into remaining base with 5 ml lemon.

2. Pour first white layer into mold and refrigerate 45–60 minutes until softly firm and tacky, able to support a spoonful. Do not make later layers until needed. Keep remaining dairy and unopened salmon cold.

3. For center, drain and check salmon, weigh 150 g edible flakes and keep cold. Bloom 7 g gelatin over 45 ml cold water 5–10 minutes. Warm 90 ml tomato juice to 140–150°F (60–65°C), take off heat and dissolve gelatin in it. Add remaining 90 ml tomato juice and 5 ml lemon. Refrigerate 15–25 minutes until cool and lightly thickened, then fold in cold salmon. Spoon gently over first white layer using back of spoon. Refrigerate 45–60 minutes until softly firm and tacky.

4. For last white layer, wash saucepan and repeat first white method with final 5 g gelatin, 45 ml water, 120 ml milk, 100 g cream cheese and 5 ml lemon. Cool to lukewarm, then spoon gently over set salmon layer. Keep at least ½ inch (1.25 cm) headroom; refrigerate excess separately.

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5. Cover and refrigerate at 40°F (4°C) or below at least 8 hours after the final white layer, until firm throughout. Allow 13 hours total for three separate preparations, two preliminary sets and final setting.

6. For unmolding, set a cold plate beside the refrigerator. Dip only the outside of the metal mold in warm, not hot, water, about 100°F (38°C), for 5–8 seconds without letting water touch food. Dry the outside, loosen just the upper edge with a clean fingertip and invert onto the plate. If stuck, repeat a brief dip rather than shaking violently. Refrigerate again immediately if not serving now. There are two ivory bands around a tomato-red salmon center. Cut 8 thin seafood-starter slices and serve promptly.

Gelatin starting strength

Use food-grade unflavored powdered gelatin with a manufacturer benchmark of 7 g for about 2 cups (500 ml) plain liquid. Weigh the stated grams: envelope sizes and powder density vary. A flavored dessert packet, collagen peptides, sheet gelatin or agar is not an equal substitute.

Cold service

This is an original retro-inspired recipe, not a recovered 1960s formula. Gelatin is animal-derived; the vegetable ingredients do not make the dish vegetarian. A reliable refrigerator and the stated earlier ingredient deadlines are essential.

Ingredient labels

Check canned salmon, cream cheese, tomato juice and gelatin labels. This is not a dairy-free fish terrine.

A useful detail

Each white layer has 5 g gelatin with 45 ml water + 120 ml milk + 5 ml lemon + 100 g cream cheese, about 270 ml. Center has 7 g gelatin with 45 ml water + 180 ml tomato + 5 ml lemon + 150 g salmon, roughly 380 ml. Estimated total 920 ml; 17 g gelatin is explicitly allocated, not one unmeasured envelope per layer.

Keep it well

Keep covered at 40°F (4°C) or below and use within 24 hours of final assembly, including the overnight set, or the earliest fish, dairy or other ingredient deadline, whichever is sooner. Keep cumulative unrefrigerated preparation and service below 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C); discard beyond those limits. Do not freeze the finished gel. Start the final 24-hour assembly clock when the last layer is added, but an earlier opened-fish deadline still takes priority; layer-setting time never resets that clock.