

## Salmon Run Roulade

*Salmon is a delicious fish and quite a challenge to catch in the open ocean. In Santa Cruz, California, the annual opening of the sport season (for non-commercial fishers) is quite an event. Fishing boats on trailers would line up in the public launch parking lot a few days in advance with the owners living onboard and partying with friends and strangers alike. The flotilla in the Monterey Bay from Santa Cruz, Moss Landing, and Monterey is huge, full of locals and people from miles away all taking their chances at catching salmon full of krill - the reason for the distinctive pink flesh - migrating to the rivers of their birth from California to Alaska.*

Here is a dish celebrating this wonderful flavor with a mixture of influences from England, France, Italy, and Japan. It was inspired from the English dish Beef Wellington while incorporating a taste of Italy with the pancetta and France with the creamed asparagus sauce.

- 1 large fresh skinless salmon fillet
- 8-10 slices pancetta
- 8 fresh asparagus stalks
- 2 small or medium shallots
- 1 fresh lemon
- 1 bunch fresh basil
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 3 tablespoons salted butter
- 1 ounce grated parmesan
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup Panko bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons either Dijon or spicy brown mustard
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon wasabi powder
- 1 bunch chives
- 1/8 teaspoon fresh grated cardamom
- Kosher salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- Peanut or other high smoke-point oil

Lay salmon out on plastic wrap. Inspect for and remove any pin-bones by running your finger along flesh head-to-tail. Using a very sharp long-bladed knife, slice salmon horizontally in half, NOT going all the way through, unfolding as you open the fillet. When you have fillet sliced open enough to fold back like opening a newspaper, open

both sides flat and place another sheet of plastic wrap over fish. Using a flat meat mallet, very gently pound the fish to flatten a bit (just use the weight of the mallet - salmon is a delicate flesh). When salmon is flattened to equal thickness throughout, remove the top sheet of plastic wrap and discard. Very lightly sprinkle salt and pepper on both sides. Whisk together mayonnaise and mustard in a bowl. Spread this mixture thinly onto both sides of fish. Place pancetta slices over, fully covering fish. Flip over so pancetta is on outside of roll. About 1.5-2 inches from the end closest to you, make a line of slightly overlapping vertical basil leaves all the way across.

Using the plastic wrap, very tightly roll up the salmon. Roll and tuck the first little bit then pull plastic out so it doesn't get engaged into the roulade, and continue with a very tight roll like a fine Cuban cigar. After the fish is fully rolled up, roll the plastic wrap tightly over to maintain the shape. Twist ends very tightly by taking entire roulade by the ends and twisting each in a different direction. This should further compress the roulade. Once the roulade is tightly wrapped, tie each end with a bit of string to prevent loosening or unraveling. Then place roulade in refrigerator for two hours.

Shortly before taking roulade out of refrigerator, take asparagus and wash thoroughly. If stalks are young, thin, and tender, just pat dry. If they are a little more thick and firm, use a vegetable peeler and peel down the stalks from about halfway up to the base to remove the tougher more fibrous outer skin. Reserve the peelings (and all such peels and parts from other vegetable dishes) in a freezer container to use in stock later. Chop the asparagus into quarters and place in a steamer basket then steam over salted water for about 10 minutes until tender.

While asparagus is steaming, peel and dice the shallots. Heat a pan over medium heat and melt 1 tablespoon butter. When butter is melted, lower in the shallots and sauté until translucent. Zest about 1/4 teaspoon of the lemon into shallots using a fine grater. Add the asparagus to the pan and about a teaspoon of the lemon juice. Sprinkle the cardamom over the asparagus and shallots. Sautee everything together for about two minutes and remove from heat. Lower everything into a blender with the remaining steaming water (should be faintly green with light aroma of asparagus) and puree.

In a saucepan over low heat, melt two tablespoons butter. When the butter is melted, lower in the flour and stir constantly for about 3-5 minutes to combine the two and cook the flour taste out - making a roux. When the roux is ready, slowly stir in the whole milk then increase the heat to medium/medium-low and let everything come to a gentle simmer. Just when it comes to a simmer, whisk in the parmesan. Let this simmer gently for about 10 minutes. Take a ladle of the simmering mixture and slowly stir into sour cream to temper it, then whisk the tempered sour cream to mixture. Turn off the heat and whisk pureed asparagus into the mixture. Taste and add a pinch of salt if desired. Whisk until sauce thickens to desired viscosity (should feel a bit like Ranch dressing).

Take roulade out of refrigerator and remove plastic wrap. Mix the wasabi powder in the Panko and gently but thoroughly coat the outside of the roulade. Place roulade in aluminum foil and again wrap tightly in a single thickness of foil with the ends twisted tightly together. In a large pan on high heat, lower a few tablespoons of the peanut oil and allow to come to temperature. When oil is hot, gently lower the aluminum-wrapped roulade into pan. Cook for 3-5 minutes, rolling constantly to ensure even cooking, until roulade is firm to touch. Firmness equals "doneness" so adjust according to personal taste. Obviously the cook cannot visually gauge how done the dish is.

When cooked to taste, remove from heat and allow to cool enough to handle. Slice roulade into half-inch slices without removing foil. Remove foil from individual slices. Plate two slices and ladle asparagus sauce around and over slices. Top with finely-chopped chives.

Serve with a fruity Chardonnay or light Rhone, a good hard cider, or amber beer.

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