

Sunset

Spring Escapes

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BEST OF THE WEST



TASTE TEST

Best smoked salmon

A beautiful fillet of flaky, savory hot-smoked salmon makes any Sunday brunch special. Judging a field of 12 Western artisan brands on both presentation and deliciousness, we named three "big fish" in a recent tasting.

All three picks eschew new fresh-pouch technology, which calls for refrigeration only after opening, in favor of the old-fashioned, cold-shipped, into-the-fridge route. We include our favorite serving suggestions—if you can resist the urge to devour the fish right out of the package. —AMELIA ASHTON

Cap'n Mike's Holy Smoke

WHY: Tender, moist, and intensely smoky, Mike's is the perfect melt-in-your-mouth fish. "I could live on this," one taster raved.

THE BACK STORY: There really is a Cap'n Mike: His name's Mike Hiebert, and he's been fishing Northern California's Bodega Bay for 20 years.

BEST WITH: Pasta with lemon, mint, and sour cream.

INFO: Alderwood Smoked Salmon, \$29 per lb.; www.holy-smokedsalmon.com or 707/585-2000

Gerard & Dominique Seafoods

WHY: Because it comes with a delicate honey glaze that's as different as it is delicious. This fish is "firm, salty, and a bit sweet—just what it should be."

THE BACK STORY: When Seattle-area restaurateurs Dominique Place and Gerard Parrap couldn't find a smoked salmon they liked, they started experimenting.

BEST WITH: Scrambled eggs and chives.
INFO: Northwest Style Bruce Gore Smoked Wild Coho Salmon, \$63 for two 1-lb. packs; www.gd-seafoods.com or 800/858-0449

Pacific Northwest Best Fish Co.

WHY: Because it's like smoked salmon candy. The caramelized coating makes this a "perfectly balanced mix of salt, smoked, and sweet."

THE BACK STORY: Dan Evans's company, in Ridgefield, WA, has been refining its brown sugar and soy brine for the past five years.

BEST WITH: A slice of cucumber, or nothing at all.
INFO: Smoked King Salmon, \$18 per lb.; www.pacificnwbest.com or 877/769-2378