

De-boning Trout or Salmon Fillets

I love catching trout, and there are some great recipes out there for cooking your catch. One thing that I've never liked about eating trout is picking through all the tiny bones present in their meat. A while back I learned a trick to cut out the strip of meat that contains the bones. Some people think that this wastes meat, but I don't throw it away. I grind the strip of meat with bones up in my meat grinder and make fish patties out of it.

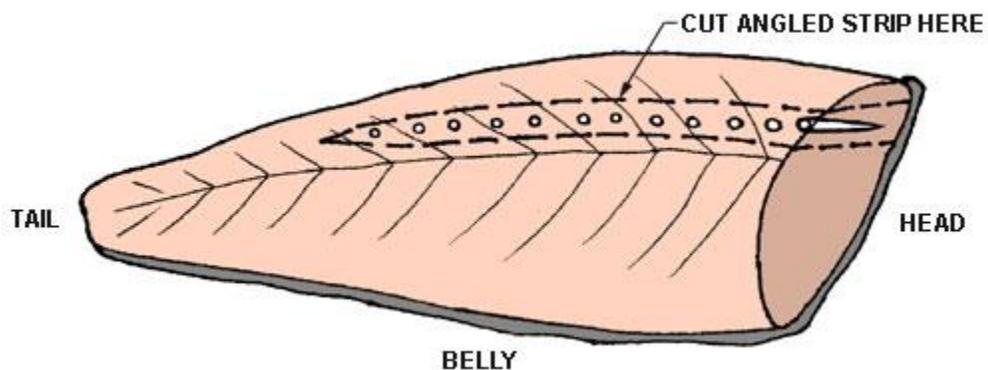
If you properly fillet a trout the only bones that should remain are the bones that stick out of the sides of the fish. These are called the pin bones and are present in all trout, salmon and other related species. With large trout or salmon you can actually pull out the pin bones with a pair of pliers. The problem with trout is that they are often too small and the bones will end up breaking off when you try to pull them out.

Procedure

Fillet your trout with the skin still in place. After you finish the fillet, run your fingers along the meat starting at the head towards the tail end. You should be able to feel some small bones sticking out from the center of the fish. Running your finger or a knife along the bones will help to make them stick out so you can see them.

Now here is the tricky part. You want to cut out only the section of meat that contains the bones without wasting any other meat. The key is understanding the anatomy of the fish. Pin bones stick out from the center of the fish and go up at about a 30 degree angle from the spine towards the outer skin. These bones only go about 2/3 of the way down the fish starting at the head and disappearing around where the anal fin starts.

The trick is to make an angled cut on either side of the pin bones that goes from the head to the section where the bones disappear.



What to do with the bones?

Don't waste the strip of removed bones and meat! Pressure can it to dissolve the bones, or smoke it and pluck out the bones afterwards. Or grind the strip of meat with bones in a meat grinder and make fish patties out of it. I just freeze the left over pin bones from each batch of cleaning fish and freeze them. Once I have enough built up for a canning batch, I can them [like this](#).

The Finished Product

Your finished product should look something like the photograph shown below. Notice the strip down the center of the fish where the bones have been removed. Now your fillet is ready to hit the grill!



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