

Salt-Roasted Fish with Lemon and Herbs

Salt can also be used as a “heat shield” on food during cooking. Packing foods such as fish, meats, or potatoes in a mound of salt protects the outer surface of the food; the salt ends up taking the brunt of any radiant heat and also cuts down on evaporation, keeping the food moister. If a whole fresh fish isn’t easy to get, try this with other foods, such as pork loin (add spices—black pepper, cinnamon, cayenne pepper—to the salt mixture) or even entire standing rib roasts.

Snag a **whole fish, such as striped bass or trout**, in the range of 2 to 5 pounds / 1 to 2 kilos. Clean and gut the fish, rinse it thoroughly, and add **lemon slices** and **herbs** (try fresh dill or fresh oregano) in the center cavity. Leave the skin on; it’ll prevent the fish from getting too salty.

Prepare a salt mixture by adding just enough **water** to **a few cups of kosher salt** so that it forms a workable paste. You can use **egg white** instead of water—useful if you’re covering something with a more complicated shape than fish.

Line a baking pan or cookie sheet with parchment paper (this’ll make cleanup easier), and add a thin layer of the salt mixture. Place the fish on top of the salt, and then pack the rest of the salt around the sides and top of the fish. You don’t need to bury the fish too deeply. Go for about $\frac{1}{2}$ " / 1 cm of salt on all sides—enough to take the brunt of the surface temperature, but not so much that the center of the fish takes too long to actually reach temperature.



Bake the fish in an oven set to 400–450°F / 200–230°C for about 20–30 minutes, using a probe thermometer to check that the internal temperature reaches 125°F / 52°C. Remove the fish from the oven and let it rest 5–10 minutes (during which carryover will bring the temp up to 130°F / 54°C). Crack open the salt crust, brush off any salt sticking to the surface of the fish, and serve.

