



Sarah's Savory Salmon Cakes are easy to make, affordable and filled with crowd-pleasing flavor. Sarah Nasello / The Forum

Sarah's Savory Salmon Cakes

*Makes: about 3 to 3 ¼ pounds of salmon cake mixture
(12 to 13 four-ounce large cakes, or 24 to 26 two-ounce medium cakes, or dozens of small cakes)*

Ingredients:

2 pounds salmon fillet
½ cup real mayonnaise
¼ cup Dijon mustard
6 dashes Tabasco
7 dashes Worcestershire sauce
2 eggs
2/3 cup orange bell pepper, small-diced into ¼-inch pieces
2/3 cup red onion, finely chopped
Juice of 1 lemon
1 teaspoon garlic powder
2 teaspoons Old Bay Seasoning
2 ½ to 3 cups panko breadcrumbs
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon ground pepper
Vegetable oil for frying

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees and position the oven rack in the center. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and drizzle lightly with olive oil. Place the salmon fillets on the baking sheet and rub each side in the oil until lightly coated. Sprinkle the top of each fillet with kosher salt and ground pepper.

Bake the salmon in the oven until white droplets of fat appear and the fillet is fully opaque and flaky in the center, about 16 to 20 minutes. Let the salmon cool for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, use a whisk to combine all the remaining ingredients except the breadcrumbs. Once the salmon is cool, use your hands to break the fish up into small pieces about ½-inch in size, adding it to the bowl as you break it. Add 2 cups of breadcrumbs to the mixture and use a rubber spatula to gently fold the ingredients together until well-combined.

Test the mixture by squeezing some in your hand: If liquid leaks out, it is too moist, so add more breadcrumbs, ¼ cup at a time, until the liquid appears fully absorbed and the mixture begins to clump together. Expect to use 2 ½ to 3 cups of breadcrumbs. The mixture is ready when it can hold the form of a cake.

Refrigerate the mixture for 30 minutes so that it can firm up before forming the cakes (this step can be skipped if short on time).

To form the cakes: Use your hands to pat the mixture into round cakes about 1 inch high and place on a baking sheet lined with foil or wax paper.

Heat ½ cup of oil in a 10-inch pan over medium-high heat. Test for readiness by tossing in a few breadcrumbs. If they sizzle, the oil is ready. Place the cakes in the pan, being careful to leave a little space between each cake. Saute on each side until golden brown, about 2 to 3 minutes each side. Place the finished salmon cakes on a plate or baking sheet lined with paper towels.

Serve immediately or place in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 4 days. The cooked cakes can be served at room temperature or reheated in the microwave or oven until heated through.

To freeze: Fish cakes can be frozen either cooked or uncooked. Place on a baking sheet lined with foil, wax paper or parchment (let cooked cakes cool to room temperature before freezing). Freeze for 2 hours until firm and frozen. Wrap each cake in plastic and store in a freezer bag or airtight container in the freezer for up to 3 months. Thaw to room temperature before reheating or cooking.

Sarah's Tips:

- If using a whole side of salmon, remove the skin and cut into 4 or 5 fillets.

- Sides of salmon often come with the skin still on, which has to be removed before baking the fillet. Some butchers will remove the skin by request, and Costco often has sides for sale where the skins have already been removed (and the price difference is negligible).
- The cakes can be made and formed in advance and refrigerated for up to 3-4 days before cooking.
- If preparing many cakes at once, keep them warm in a 200-degree oven after frying, until ready to serve.
- For a quick aioli dipping sauce: Combine 1/3 cup good mayonnaise with 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1 clove of garlic (finely minced), 2 tablespoons finely chopped chives, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper.

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"Home with the Lost Italian" is a weekly column written by Sarah Nasello featuring recipes by her husband, Tony Nasello. The couple owned Sarello's in Moorhead and lives in Fargo with their son, Giovanni. Readers can reach them at sarahnasello@gmail.com.