



## THE SMOKE CURING OF FINNAN HADDIES

*Cure No. 39*

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### CUTTING AND BEHEADING

Slit open the belly of the haddock, remove the guts and black lining of the belly and cut off the head neatly. The gutted haddock is given an extra cut down along the backbone in the gut cavity from shoulder to the tail.

### WASHING

The split fish must be washed carefully in clean water. Use a stiff brush and wash off all slime, blood marks, and any remnants of the black lining of the belly.

### PICKLING

The washed fish are brined in wooden tubs containing 80 - 90 per cent saturated pickle. (Ninety per cent saturated brine is made by dissolving thirty-two pounds of salt in ten gallons of water). The haddies will float in the pickle and they should be stirred occasionally to ensure even salting. They are left in the pickle for 30 - 60 minutes, the time depending on the size of the fish and the salt flavour desired. The haddock may be dyed by adding the appropriate quantity of dye to the pickle. The pickle must be kept up to strength by adding salt or fresh pickle to the brining tubs. In warm weather the pickle putrefies quickly, and fresh pickle is made up every day.

### HANGING AND DRYING

After removing the haddock from the brine they are attached to the "tenters" or hanging rods, by shoving the sharpened nails of the tenter through the skin and flesh of the napes of the fish. The fish are hung with the skin side next to the hanging rod. The tenters are placed on the stringers in the smoke-house so that the fish do not touch each other. The rods on adjacent stringers, are not placed one

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directly above another but are staggered slightly, so that the tail of one fish does not touch the head of the fish below it. Six haddock may be hung on each tenter.

After the fish are hung in the smoke-house it is customary to allow them to drain for about an hour, and then the drying fires are lighted. In a house 8 x 14 feet two hardwood fires should be lighted on the floor about three feet from each end. Hardwood sticks or slabs, such as birch, beech, maple, oak, hickory, etc. should be used, for soft woods such as pine, fir, cedar, etc. contain resins, which may give a disagreeable taste to the fish. When the fish are draining and drying it is usual to have the lower half of the smokehouse door, the windows at the back of the house and the ventilator doors on the roof open. The manipulation of the doors and ventilators regulates the draft, and hence the rate of burning of the fires in the house. The important consideration in drying and smoking is that the fish must not become too warm or the fish muscle will become partly cooked on the surface. "Cooked" fish are not considered to be a first class product, and in addition are liable to fall to the floor of the smoke-house. The fish should not become so warm that they feel warm to the skin of the arm. The smokehouse should not be allowed to go above 80°F.

The length of time required to dry the fish depends on many different conditions, such as velocity and direction of the wind, outside temperature, the location of the smoke-house, and whether the day is humid or not. No specific directions can be given as it is largely a matter of experience. The skin and surface of the fish should feel dry, or "tacky" to the touch, and the time of drying may be anywhere from two to five hours.

The haddock are usually dried to a greater extent than fillets. In a properly dried haddock the fin on the back of the fish and the tail will feel dry to the touch.

### SMOKING

As soon as the haddock have been dried sufficiently the clear drying fires are smothered with about one and one-half bags of dry hardwood sawdust for each fire. Another method for the making of smoke fires is to place on the floor about one bag of mill shavings to a depth of about four inches, and upon this put one and one-half bags of dry hardwood sawdust. This is the method that is usually used in the larger plants for the smoking of cod fillets, haddock and kippered herring. Softwood sawdust should be avoided as it gives an undesirable flavour to the fish.

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After the smoke fires are lighted the windows at the back of the house are closed, and the trap-doors in the ventilator on the roof opened on the leeward side. The bottom door should be kept nearly closed so that the smoke fires will glow and not burst into flame. As in the case of drying, the draft up through the house must not be too great, or large dust and soot particles will be carried up from the floor of the house and settle out on the surface of the fish.

The length of time of smoking depends upon many things, such as weather conditions, location and construction of the smokehouse, and depth of colour desired on the fish. A mild cured haddock will require from eight to twenty hours to smoke it to a suitable depth of colour without the use of artificial dye. The smoke fires are re-built as needed. During the warm weather it is customary to carry out the smoking in the night time.

The smoked fish are allowed to cool off before being packed in order to avoid sweating of the boxed fish. The smoked fish are trimmed, soot particles brushed off, and packed neatly in paper-lined boxes.

The general directions outlined above will produce a mild cured haddock which will only remain in good condition for a few days if stored at room temperature. These fish should be shipped out for sale immediately, or should be placed in cold storage. If a hard-cured product is desired the fish should be salted, dried and smoked for a much longer time than is mentioned above.

In case the fisherman is not familiar with smoked fish products, a good sample of the type of smoked fish it is desired to produce should be obtained, and an attempt made to duplicate these cured fish in manner of cutting, salty flavour, gloss or sheen, colour and dryness.

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