

## Smoked Pike Perch with Caviar Emulsion

*Birch-smoked fish, sea lettuce oil, and caviar emulsion.*

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Yield: 10 tasting portions

Prep Time: 1½ hours (plus optional brining)

Active Time: 1 hour

Service Temperature: Warm (45–50°C)

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### Ingredients

#### **Pike Perch Fillet**

- 10 small fillets pike perch (or zander), 80–100 g each, skin on
  - 40 g fine sea salt
  - 1 L water (for brine)
  - Birch wood chips (for smoking)
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#### **Caviar Emulsion**

- 60 g caviar (Baeri or Oscietra preferred)
  - 2 egg yolks
  - 10 ml lemon juice
  - 120 ml neutral oil (grapeseed or rice bran)
  - 20 ml warm fish stock or water
  - Pinch of sea salt
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#### **Sea Lettuce Oil**

- 10 g dried sea lettuce (ulva)
  - 150 ml grapeseed oil
  - 1 g salt
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#### **Optional Garnishes**

- Fresh sea herbs (samphire, sea fennel, or baby sorrel)
  - Pickled shallot petals (acid contrast)
  - Micro dill or bronze fennel fronds
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### Method

#### **1. Prepare the Brine**

Dissolve 40 g sea salt in 1 L water.

Submerge fish fillets for 15 minutes to lightly season and firm texture.

Remove, rinse briefly, and pat dry.

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#### **2. Cold Smoke the Fish**

Prepare a cold smoker ( $\leq 30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) with birch wood chips.

Smoke fillets for 20 minutes — aim for a delicate, clean aroma, not heavy char.

After smoking, gently wrap in parchment and refrigerate up to 4 hours before service.

*If no smoker available:*

Use a stovetop smoking setup with birch chips, smoking under a lid for 8–10 minutes at low flame, keeping internal fish temperature  $< 35^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

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### 3. Cook the Pike Perch (à la minute)

Before service, heat a nonstick pan with a drop of neutral oil.  
Sear the fish skin-side down over medium heat until crisp (2–3 minutes).  
Flip, add a knob of butter, and baste gently for 30 seconds.  
Rest briefly — internal temperature should reach 45–50°C for tenderness.

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### 4. Prepare the Caviar Emulsion

In a blender, combine egg yolks and lemon juice; blend briefly.  
Slowly drizzle in oil to form a thick emulsion (like mayonnaise).  
Add warm fish stock to loosen to sauce consistency.  
Gently fold in caviar by hand to preserve pearls.  
Season lightly — the caviar brings natural salinity.  
**Optional refinement:** Pass half the emulsion through a fine chinois for smoothness, fold in remaining caviar for visible pearls.

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### 5. Make the Sea Lettuce Oil

Warm oil to 70°C, add sea lettuce and salt.  
Blend until vivid green, then strain through coffee filter.  
Keep at room temp.

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### 6. Plating (Service)

**Plateware:** Stone-gray or black ceramic plate with matte texture.  
Brush or spoon sea lettuce oil in a gentle swoosh on the plate.  
Place pike perch fillet skin-side up at a slight angle.  
Spoon caviar emulsion alongside or slightly over the fish (never hide the skin crisp).  
Add a small quenelle of fresh caviar (1–2 g) on top for luxury.  
Garnish with sea herbs or micro dill.

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### 7. Service Ritual

Serve under a glass dome filled with a puff of birch smoke.  
Dome lifted at the table for an aromatic reveal.  
**Server line:**  
“Birch-smoked pike perch with caviar and sea lettuce — the forest and sea in one breath.”

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### Chef’s Notes

**Flavor progression:** smoke → salt → cream → umami.  
**Temperature harmony:** warm fish, room-temp emulsion, ambient oil.  
**Texture arc:** crisp skin → delicate flesh → silky sauce → saline pearls.

### Wine pairing:

*Chenin Blanc (Loire)* — dry, floral, lightly oxidative.  
*Alternative:* Sparkling sake or mineral Riesling.  
Non-alcoholic pairing: Smoked green apple–dill juice.