Halibut with Ginger and Scallions

This is one of my favorite Healthiest Way of Eating recipes. The health-promoting omega-3 fatty acids from the halibut help to reduce inflammation and the shiitake mushrooms not only enhance the flavor of this recipe but also builds a strong immune system.

Prep and Cook Time: 20 minutes
3/4 lb halibut cut into 2 pieces
1/4 cups light vegetable broth
1/4 cup mirin rice wine*
3 medium cloves garlic, chopped
1 TBS soy sauce
1 TBS fresh lemon juice
1 TBS minced fresh ginger
2 cups fresh shiitake mushrooms, sliced 1/4-inch thick
1 cup coarsely chopped scallion
salt and white pepper to taste

*mirin is a sweet Japanese rice wine without the alcohol content; you can find it in many of your local health food stores or in the Japanese section of your local grocery store.

Chop garlic and let sit for 5 minutes to enhance their health-promoting properties. Bring the broth and mirin wine to a simmer on medium-high heat in a 10-inch skillet. Add garlic, soy sauce, lemon juice, ginger, scallions, and mushrooms. Place halibut steaks on top, reduce heat to low and cover. Cook for about 5 minutes, depending on thickness. Season with salt and pepper. Remove steaks and place on a plate. Spoon scallions and mushroom broth over fish and serve.

Serves 2
Healthy Food Tip

Should I include or avoid smoked salmon in my Healthiest Way of Eating?

In addition to having less omega-3s than non-smoked fish, smoked fish may contain toxic substances called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Many of these compounds have been shown to increase risk of cancer. When wood or coal is used for smoking, the hotter the wood or coal burns, the more PAHs are created. I don't recommend regular consumption of smoked foods for this reason.

Smoking fish has been a traditional way to preserve fish for many different cultures. Fish that are smoked in high heat for longer periods of time are less likely to require the addition of preservatives to extend their shelf life; however, they may also have a higher PAH content. "Cold-smoked" fish avoid some of the negative consequences of high heat exposure but still contain PAHs and may have been preserved with nitrates or nitrites depending on the manufacturer. (While "cold-smoking" doesn't have a legal definition, it generally involves temperatures between 70-100F (21-38C) and a time period of at least 12 hours in length, and sometimes as long as three weeks.

"Lox" is a word used to describe salmon that has been cured in brine that typically includes salt and sugar. This type of salmon may or may not be smoked. When it is smoked, however, it is usually "cold-smoked." Nitrates or nitrites are sometimes added to lox as a preservative, but many high-quality manufacturers omit this additive. The lack of nitrates and nitrites is desirable from my perspective even though lox that is nitrate-free and exposed to minimal heat will have a shorter shelf life than salmon smoked in high heat and preserved with nitrates or nitrites.

Many factors would be important in determining whether to include or avoid smoked salmon in a Healthiest Way of Eating. Most individuals in a relatively good state of health with fully nourishing diets would be able to include smoked salmon and benefit from its consumption. These individuals would have plenty of additional omega-3 food sources in their weekly meals, and they would also have healthy detoxification systems that could readily process and eliminate the PAHs or preservatives found in the smoked fish. For other individuals, non-smoked salmon would be a much better choice. These individuals would not have a good supply of
alternative omega-3 sources in their food plan or their body's detoxification systems would not be well supported.
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