SUJIKO

Traditional Japanese sujiko features salted and cured Alaska salmon roe within the natural membrane or film (in-sac). Sujiko is a Japanese word composed of "suji," which means "line," and "ko," which means "child." The name refers to the way in which the eggs are lined up in the ovary. The raw egg sacs are washed in a saturated brine solution, drained, packed with salt and then allowed to cure.

Grading Information

Typically, there are three standard grades of sujiko: No.1, No.2 and No.3, plus "off-grade" which includes roe that is cut, broken, soft, or off-color. In general, high-grade sujiko usually follow these guidelines:

- Eggs are large in size for the species
- Color is bright and uniform throughout the sac
- Eggs are firm and fresh at a balanced maturity level, neither too old nor immature
- Surface membranes are strong yet soft with the sac intact and with eggs arranged in neat lines

Lower grades of sujiko are well suited for the production of salmon roe spreads, pâtés and butters.

Alaska salmon sujiko can be purchased as salted sujiko, soy-marinated sujiko, or as frozen unprocessed roe. Packaging typically includes origin, importer contact information, and will state whether or not the product is lower in salt content or uses a salt substitute.

Producers have their own specifications, so it is important for buyers to work closely with their suppliers.

The cold, clean waters of Alaska provide a healthy, natural habitat for the five species of wild Alaska salmon. Each year, this rich environment yields millions of high quality fish, famous for their delicious flavor and superior texture. These same wild salmon produce some of the world's finest roe, bursting with all that is best about Alaska salmon.

Alaska salmon roe is a wild, natural product high in lean protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Often referred to as "Golden" or "Ruby" eggs, Alaska salmon roe products are indeed precious and are chiefly enjoyed in the form of two elegant and flavorful delicacies: caviar and sujiko.

Wild Alaska salmon roe is a resource strictly managed for sustainability. Constitutionally mandated regulations and close monitoring of Alaska's salmon fisheries help to preserve and protect Alaska salmon roe for generations to come.

Steve Lee

All Alaska seafood is wild and sustainable and is managed for protection against overfishing, habitat damage and pollution. In Alaska, the fish come first!

Unlike fish stocks in other parts of the world, no Alaska salmon stocks are threatened or endangered. For this reason, Alaska salmon roe represents a responsible, natural choice in today's global seafood market.

For more information on Alaska salmon, how they are harvested and the great variety of products that are available from this fishery, please refer to the Alaska Salmon Buyer's Guide from the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

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ALASKA SALMON ROE

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SALMON CAVIAR

Wild Alaska salmon roe is well suited to several product forms but is most widely enjoyed as caviar (individual processed eggs). High-grade Alaska salmon caviar is bright and elegant and is often used to garnish delicate canapés and hors d'oeuvres. It lends flavor and nutrition to any dish and can also be found in salads, soups and entrées.

Alaska salmon caviar is also known as "ikura." Salted ikura is the most well-known and popular form of ikura. It is a prominent ingredient in Japanese cuisine, featured in many types of sushi and commonly served over rice. Soy ikura is made by marinating the roe in soy sauce and is produced in smaller quantities. Both caviar and ikura are packaged in glass "crystal" jars, sold by the tray, or available in other modern containers.

Purchasing/Receiving

As a rule, high-grade salmon caviar has a consistent bright, red-orange outer color with a center the color and consistency of honey. Eggs should be shiny and slightly transparent, whole (not broken or squashed) and easily separated from one another. In general, caviar is graded on the basis of egg size (larger is better), salt content (lower is better) and drip (zero is best). High-grade caviar eggs should be firm but pliable to pressure without breakage. Alaska salmon caviar should have a mild, pleasant smell and a rich taste.

To provide additional product safety and increase shelf life, some salmon caviar is sold pasteurized. Product taste is not significantly affected by pasteurization. Pasteurized product may be softer, lighter in color, and less shiny in appearance than non-pasteurized product. More juice is also accepted in non-pasteurized product. In general, higher-grade caviar can withstand the pasteurization process best.

Some Alaska producers pack caviar in modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) trays. These are sealed trays that are either flushed with nitrogen gas to remove the oxygen, or contain packets of oxygen-consuming granules. By minimizing the oxidation of oils in the eggs, the frozen shelf life can be increased.

Steve Lee

Storage

Salmon caviar can be frozen to increase shelf life. As with pasteurization, higher quality product is better suited for freezing. While other types of caviar, such as sturgeon, are not suited for freezing, salmon eggs have thick membranes that prevent damage. The salt content in salmon caviar causes freezing to take place at low temperatures. For long-term storage, -40° C is recommended. Thawing should take place slowly in order to preserve quality. Caviar in wholesale packages is normally kept frozen below -10° C.

Nutritional Information

While Alaska salmon is known for its high level of heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids and lean protein, the omega-3 and protein content found in the roe far exceeds that of the meat. In addition, important vitamins and minerals are abundant in Alaska salmon roe.

KETA SALMON, *Oncorhynchus keta*

Alaska keta salmon are harvested in late summer. Keta salmon roe is pale red with strong orange overtones. Keta caviar is the most popular type of salmon caviar, prized for its large size. The highest-grade keta caviar is 5 mm or larger with a salt content of 2.5 to 3.5 percent and zero drip.* Keta caviar is also regarded for its flavor, long shelf life and signature "pop" in the mouth.

PINK SALMON, *Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*

Alaska pink salmon, the smallest and most abundant of the Alaska salmon species, are harvested in late summer. Pink salmon roe is orange with a subtle rose hue. The highest-grade pink caviar is 3.5 mm or larger in size, with a salt content of 2.5 to 3.5 percent and zero drip.* Pink caviar is valued for its sweet, mild taste and long shelf life.

SOCKEYE SALMON, *Oncorhynchus nerka*

Most Alaska sockeye salmon are caught in mid-summer. Sockeye salmon roe is bright red and significantly smaller than that of the other salmon species. Much of the sockeye roe harvest is sold in-sac (as sujiko), though some is used for caviar. The highest-grade sockeye caviar is 2.5 mm and up and has a salt content of 2.5 to 3.5 percent and no drip.* Sockeye caviar can have a slightly bitter natural finish and has a shorter shelf life than other species due to the natural fats found in the yolk of the eggs.

COHO SALMON, *Oncorhynchus kisutch*

Alaska coho salmon run later than the other species and are generally the last to spawn. Coho salmon roe is mid-sized and closer to red than orange in color. The highest-grade coho caviar is 4.5 mm and up, with a salt content of 2.5 to 3.5 percent and no drip.* Like sockeye, coho caviar has a slightly bitter natural finish and shorter shelf life caused by unstable fatty acids.

KING SALMON, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*

Alaska king salmon arrive earliest in the summer salmon season and are harvested year-round in Alaska. It is important to note, however, that king salmon roe is only taken in the summer months. Like keta, king salmon produce large eggs. The highest-grade king caviar measures 5 mm and up, has a salt content of 2.5 to 3.5 percent and no drip.* King caviar is rich in flavor and produces a pleasant "pop" in the mouth.

**Salmon roe of smaller size or higher salt content is graded according to individual company specifications. Producers have their own specifications, so it is important for buyers to work closely with their suppliers.*
Note: Caviar salt content is market determined and is not subject to food safety regulations.

Alaska Salmon Roe Nutrients and Fatty Acids*

NUTRIENT	AMOUNT PER 1 OZ. SERVING
Calories	60 cal
Calories from fat	15 cal
Total fat	2 g
Saturated	-
Monounsaturated	-
Polyunsaturated	-
Protein	9 g
Sodium	390 mg
Calcium	0 mg
Iron	0 mg
Vitamin A (retinol)	10% of DV
Vitamin C	5% of DV
Cholesterol	145 mg
n-3 Fatty acids	
Alpha-linolenic (ALA)	-
Eicosapentaenoic (EPA)	310 mg
Docosapentaenoic (DPA)	-
Docosahexaenoic (DHA)	370 mg
Total EPA + DHA	680 mg

*Mean values in 3 samples of pink salmon caviar

Analyzed by Medallion Labs, 2004
Courtesy of Seafood Products Association, Seattle, WA

Note: Data based on Alaska pink salmon roe, which is representative of most kinds of Alaska salmon roe. However, actual amounts will vary between species and according to individual packers.

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