

BEETROOT-CURED SALMON WITH CUCUMBER & APPLE PICKLE

— SERVES TEN —

Like many other northern European cities, Berlin has many recipes for cured salmon. Smoked and salted fish is wonderful in many different countries, but I was particularly struck by the display in KaDeWe, a department store whose name I cannot see without remembering a song from the late and much-lamented David Bowie, "Where Are We Now?" which is all about Berlin. At the counter were every type of herring, including bloaters and red herring, salt fish, smoked sprats, smoked cod's roe and about four or five different cured salmon dishes, one being a beetroot cure, of which I have come up with my own version, which marries the flavour of beetroot with caraway seeds and white pepper. The salad is an amalgam of similar accompaniments from restaurants all over Berlin, though the main inspiration came from a restaurant called La Soupe Populaire.

The cured salmon keeps in the fridge for three to four days, and also freezes well.

For the cure
250g beetroot, boiled until tender, peeled
100g coarse sea salt
75g white sugar
2 tsp caraway seeds, crushed or coarsely ground
2 tsp white peppercorns, crushed
1kg salmon fillet in 2 pieces of 500g each

For the salad
4 dessert apples, peeled and cored
1 small red onion, peeled
2 cucumbers
6 tsp cider vinegar
2 tsp rapeseed oil
2 tsp horseradish cream
¼ tsp salt
1 tsp sugar
Small handful chill fronds, roughly chopped

Put the cooked beetroot, sea salt, sugar, caraway seeds and white pepper into a blender and blitz to a purée.

Smear the cure all over the salmon flesh and sandwich the fillets together with the skin-side outermost. Wrap in 2 or 3 layers of clingfilm and lift on to a shallow tray. Rest a smaller tray or chopping board on top and weigh it down with tins or weights. Refrigerate for 2 days, turning the fish every 12 hours.

When ready to serve, discard any excess cure from the salmon. Slice as you would smoked salmon: across the fillet in thin slices with the knife at an angle, then close to the skin to release the flesh. Arrange on a serving plate.

For the salad, using a mandolin or a very sharp knife, slice the apple, red onion and cucumber into wafer-thin slices and put in a bowl. Combine the cider vinegar, oil, horseradish cream, salt and sugar to make a dressing and pour over the salad. Toss well. Dress with the dill. Serve alongside the salmon.

