

food souvenirs

MY PLANE had just landed in Sitka, Alaska. I was expecting to see a bit of the place upon arrival, but my cousin Robert, a Sitka resident, had other plans. "Want to go out on a boat?" he asked at the airport.

The boat turned out to be a sleek, elaborately equipped charter fishing vessel. As we motored out into Sitka Sound, Robert and his friend Bill baited rods with mysterious-looking high-tech whirligigs. That accomplished, Robert and I sprawled on cushions, caught up on the 25 years since we'd seen each other, and enjoyed spectacular views of Sitka Sound, which is studded with rocky, spruce-covered islands.

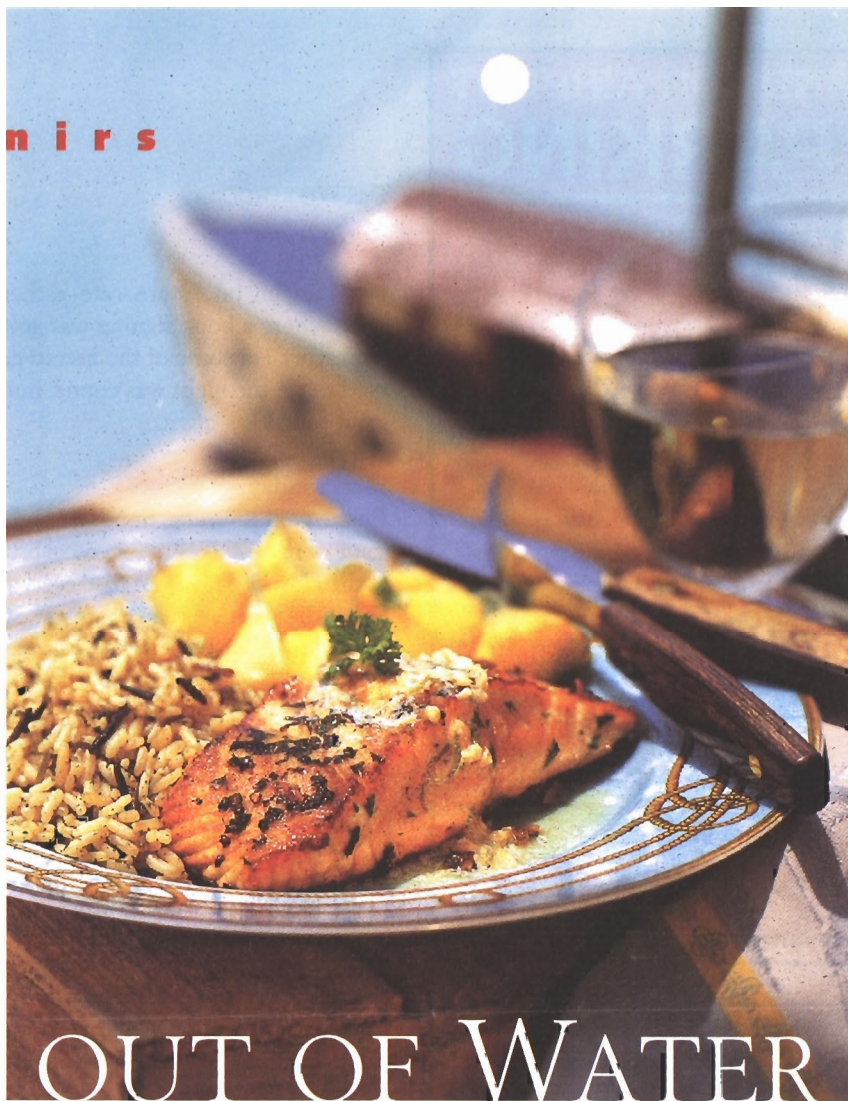
But as captain, Bill was preoccupied with what might be happening on other fishing boats. "Wonder if they're catching anything," he'd mutter, peering suspiciously across the sound. When, after several hours, Robert bagged our first fish, a 20-pound king salmon, Bill mellowed. When it became clear that other nearby fishermen had noticed our success, he turned downright ebullient.

A couple more hours had passed with nary a nibble when one of the lines suddenly went taut. "Get down here, Jean!" Robert bellowed from the lower deck. "Me?" I asked. Terrified as only a city dweller can be, I took over the rod and slavishly followed Robert's orders, sometimes playing out line, sometimes reeling it in. Eventually, the fish tired and I was able to get it close enough so that Bill could snare it in the net. It was a burly 25-pound king. I felt pretty smug.

Back in Sitka, Robert took the fish to a local processing company. "My" salmon was to be filleted, sealed in plastic, and frozen for transport; Robert's was destined for dinner. That evening, in Robert's kitchen, I examined his catch—the freshest piece of salmon I had ever seen, brilliant orange and firm-fleshed. Grilled over charcoal, it was delicious.

Days later, on my way out of town, I picked up a box containing 22 pounds of frozen Alaskan king salmon and carried it back on my flight to Los Angeles. We ate that salmon for a year. And every time I served it, I got to tell my one and only fish story.

—JEAN T. BARRETT



CARIN KRASNER

FISH OUT OF WATER

grilled salmon with lime, sesame, and ginger butter

Adapted from The Fiddlehead Cookbook, by Susan Brook, John DeCherney, Nancy DeCherney, and Deborah Marshall, recipes from the popular Fiddlehead Restaurant in Juneau, Alaska. Reprinted with permission of St. Martin's Inc.

Marinade

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry vermouth or dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 6 salmon steaks or fillets (about 3 pounds)

Butter

- 6 tablespoons butter, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger root
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lime zest

Whisk together marinade ingredients; pour into a shallow pan. Add salmon steaks and coat well. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to marinate in refrigerator for 1 to 4 hours.

Use an electric mixer to cream butter until smooth. Add lime juice, sesame oil, ginger, and lime zest. Combine thoroughly. If you are not going to use the butter immediately, refrigerate it; otherwise, keep it out as you prepare the salmon.

Preheat the grill or broiler. When grill is hot, remove salmon from marinade and cook about 5 minutes on each side, depending on the thickness of the fish; 10 minutes total cooking time for 1-inch-thick pieces. Fish should lose its translucency in the middle and flake easily. Transfer to a serving platter or plates. Top each fillet with a dollop of the flavored butter and serve at once. Serves 6.

Food styling by Karen Gillingham; prop styling by Kim Wong. Taitu "Mare" dinner plate available at Gifts et al, Del Mar; Ginkgo flatware at Bristol Kitchens, South Pasadena; Le Jacquard Français "Chinese Market" napkin at Bo Danica, La Jolla; Aprepo "Orbit" goblet at the Silver Store, La Jolla; Palecek decorative boat at Cityscapes, Pasadena.