

# Simple and Fancy Fried Trout

Preparation time: 15 minutes | Cooking time: 30 minutes | Serves 4



Maybe one reason so few anglers keep trout anymore is that they don't know how to clean and cook fish. That's what one FWP biologist suggested while reviewing the article "Has Catch-and-Release Gone Overboard?" (page 26). There are other reasons, most notably the success of catch-and-release in protecting fish populations from overharvest. Yet biologists say that some populations could actually grow larger fish if more anglers kept a few smaller ones to eat.

If you're new to harvesting trout for their organic protein (talk about "wild-caught" seafood!), their delicious taste, and the benefits to fish population size structure, here's how it's done:

- ▶ Make a clean kill by firmly holding the fish belly side up in both hands and bringing the back of the head down crisply against a streamside rock or boat gunnel. If you are wading, keep the fish as cool as possible by placing it in the stream (anchored by a stringer or a few rocks to keep it from floating away). Or put it in a cooler with ice in your boat or vehicle.
- ▶ To clean a trout, turn it upside down and insert the tip of a small knife into the anal vent. Cut a deep slit all the way to and through the lower jaw. Pull out the intestines and, with the knife tip or your thumbnail, scrape away the bloodline along the spine. Pull or cut off the red gills. Give the cavity a brief wash. Keep the fish cool until ready to cook.
- ▶ The easiest way to cook trout when backpacking is to sprinkle dried cajun or seafood seasoning over the fish and in the cavity. Drizzle on a little oil, if you have some. Wrap the fish in aluminum foil, then put it on a campfire grill or coals for a few minutes on each side. The simplest method at home is to dry the fish with paper towels, dip it in a wash of one egg beaten with 1 T. water, then coat it in flour seasoned with salt and pepper. Fry in oil until both sides turn golden brown. Serve with a lemon slice. For something fancier, try the recipe at right.

—Tom Dickson is editor of Montana Outdoors.

This recipe for four small trout is based on a popular recipe by the Food Network's Anne Burrell. Halve the ingredients for two trout.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1½ c. bread crumbs
- 1 clove garlic, smashed
- 2 t. dried oregano
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 lemons, juiced, and the zest of 1 lemon
- Salt
- ½ c. Dijon mustard
- 4 (10- to 12-ounce) trout, cleaned, rinsed, and dried with paper towels
- Extra-virgin olive oil or vegetable oil
- 1 T. butter

## DIRECTIONS

On a large plate, combine the bread crumbs, garlic, oregano, red pepper flakes, lemon zest, and salt to taste.

In a small bowl, mix the mustard and juice of one lemon. Brush both sides of the trout with mustard mixture. Coat the fish on both sides with the seasoned bread crumbs and press firmly to adhere the crumbs to the fish.

Preheat the oven to 250 degrees F.

Coat a large skillet with ½ inch of oil and place over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the fish, skin side down, and cook 6 minutes. Flip the fish and cook the other side 2 minutes until golden brown and crispy. Drain fish on paper towels then place in a rack in the oven to keep warm. You will likely need to work in two batches to do four fish.

Discard the oil and wipe out any brown bits from the pan with a paper towel. Add the butter and remaining lemon juice and swirl to combine as the butter melts. Season with salt, to taste, and reduce by about half.

Transfer the fish to a serving platter, drizzle with the butter lemon sauce, and serve.

▶ Another delicious recipe is *Sesame-Crusted Pan-Fried Trout* from our May-June 2017 issue: <http://fwp.mt.gov/mtoutdoors/HTML/articles/recipes/sesametrou.htm>.