

# Salmon!

By Kevin Ganter



**H**ave you heard the saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover?” Well, that is true about salmon. To the untrained eye, wild caught and farmed salmon look the same. However, things change once you physically and nutritionally examine the fish.

The bright red colored flesh and lean white strips of fat of wild caught salmon are the result of several years spent feeding on the sea’s natural foods and swimming against the cold, strong currents of the ocean in places like Alaska. Their nutritional profile is complete with naturally occurring micronutrients, fats, minerals, vitamins and antioxidants. This offers better flavor, better texture and a nutritional profile that is far ahead of any farm-raised seafood.

Farmed salmon are caged in tight pens throughout their lives and are typically fed grain products and a fish-based diet. Antibiotics, pesticides and coloring agents are added to help prevent diseases and parasites and to turn their white flesh into a color similar to the wild-caught salmon. Farmed salmon may contain slightly higher levels of omega-3s, but unfortunately, their omega-3s comes from fishmeal typically made up of ground fish parts or fish oil.

While both wild caught and farmed salmon may look similar, they do not offer the same nutritional benefits. Farmed salmon has fewer dietary advantages and has several significant disadvantages.

- Farmed salmon contains high concentrations of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) as well as other dangerous contaminants not found in the wild caught salmon.
- Artificial coloring, toxic byproducts, antibiotics and other drugs and cancer-causing contaminants are present to various degrees in the tissues, often at levels that can affect human health.
- Farmed salmon have many more pro-inflammatory omega-6 fatty acids than the anti-inflammatory omega-3s.

### What are the nutritional benefits of wild salmon to farm-raised salmon?

- Wild caught salmon has 32% fewer calories than farmed.
- Wild caught salmon has half the fat of farmed.
- Wild caught salmon contains more calcium, iron, potassium and zinc.
- Wild caught contain less sodium (due to natural sea salt).

### Does Cost Reflect Benefits?

Farmed salmon is much cheaper than the wild-caught salmon and it’s available everywhere since salmon is the most popular type of fish raised in farms at sea. But it’s worth spending the money on salmon that comes from places like Alaska. Many organizations recommend eating Omega-3s and salmon two or three times a week. The American Medical Association, for example, says consuming salmon lessens the risk of deaths due to cardiovascular diseases by more than 30%.

### So How Can You Tell?

From my observation, almost all of the salmon in Singapore’s grocery stores and wet markets are farmed from Norway. I have no data to support this, but I would venture to say that figure is around 95%.

If it is not labeled, it’s very difficult to be certain without asking the retailer or restaurant. It is always best to ask. However, there are some clues. If the label reads “Atlantic” salmon then it is farmed. In Canada, there are no legal commercial fisheries for Atlantic salmon and virtually all Atlantic salmon served in restaurants or sold in stores are farmed fish. If the label simply reads “fresh salmon,” there is a good chance it is farmed. Most wild salmon will be identified by species: pink, coho, sockeye,



Left; Wild caught salmon Right; Farmed salmon.

chinook or chum salmon. But chinook (also called king) salmon are farmed as well, so the name is not a guarantee.

Visually, there are two simple ways to tell the difference between wild caught and farmed.

- Color: The color of wild-caught salmon varies between the species, but typically range from pink to bright red. The color of farm-raised salmon vary as well but they typically range in color from orange to light red
- White Fat Streaks: Due to the sedentary lifestyle, trapped in open water pens, farm-raised salmon contains large white fat streaks. These fatty white streaks are not common in wild caught salmon.

### Where to find the best wild-caught Alaskan Salmon in Singapore?

Check out The Halia at Raffles Hotel or the Botanic Gardens. You can get your fix of Alaskan Sockeye Salmon at Flutes at the National Museum and/or Vis a Vis in the near Kembangan. You can rest assured these fine establishments are providing real 100% Alaskan seafood. And you can buy it yourself from us, The Alaska Guys.

So before you buy, have a good think about what benefits you can get from wild salmon over cheaper, farmed salmon. (Who ever heard of a fish farm anyway?) Don’t judge the book by its cover. Be sure to flip through the pages and judge for yourself.

*Kevin Ganter has lived in Singapore for the past 13 years with roots in Alaska. He is co-owner of The Alaska Guys.*



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