

Re: Humiliation redefined

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- *From:* floyd@xxxxxxxxxx (Floyd L. Davidson)
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jmornngstar@xxxxxxx wrote:

In Alaska, many people won't eat salmon and just feed it to their dogs. Seems a waste to me because I will eat any fish. I didn't believe the first person who told me that. I thought that they were pulling me leg. Now halibut, in Alaska, you would think it was lobster. Invite people for halibut and you never get a no.

You been misled, completely. Salmon is the main stay of *most* of the people who live in bush Alaska, and always has been. Depending on where one lives, there are King, Red, Silver, Chum and Pink salmon (listed in order of quality for premium fish). People eat all of them... except in some particular circumstances...

For example, I won't bother with Pink salmon, *ever*. But it is in fact one of the highly marketed canned salmon, right behind Red (Sockeye) salmon.

But what you've heard about is Chum (aka Dog Salmon), which on the major river systems where all 5 types of salmon are available, is commonly used as dog food. Note that is often true because they deteriorate very rapidly when near their spawning area, and it is easy to catch thousands of them (a team of 12 dogs will eat 1 a day each, for over 4000 fish a year). Hence a lot of the Chums that are caught are not fit for human consumption. They are easy to catch in a fish wheel too. But for people who have Kings, Reds and Silvers... Dog Salmon are for the dogs!

Typically Chum salmon intended for dog food will be dried differently than salmon intended for human consumption. Normally to dry fish the meat is "pleated" about every inch or two, very carefully. But that process takes a lot of time (many minutes per fish) and it would be impossible to handle the hundreds of fish per day needed to feed a large dog team. Hence for dog food a fish is split in two, and each side gets only 3

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or 4 pleats. The fact that the fish "spoils" due to being too thick doesn't bother a dog at all.

You can look at any rack of drying fish and tell easily if it is dog food or human food. Long thin strips are a delicacy meant for humans only. So are "blankets", where the backbone is removed and the entire fish is spread out flat. But a fish that is split in two with only 3–4 slices, is for dogs.

There are catches on that though! Decades ago when I was young and full of too much energy, I had 40 to 50 sled dogs in the back yard, and spent my summers drying fish for them. With practice, a small female Chum takes about 30 seconds, and a large male takes about 45 seconds to cut. Compare that to the time it takes to carefully slice each one in two and make slices every 1 1/2 inches from top to bottom on both sides! However, I once teased an "old" Yup'ik man (who is still alive, and *really* old now, but then he was younger than I am now) because he was very carefully cutting Chum salmon as if it was for human consumption. His response was a wry smile and a short statement.

"You never know who is going to be the dog."

You have to be careful around here because most of the salmon is farmed, not fresh. I will have to check TJs to see if theirs is fresh.

Barb, on your trip in Anchorage did you see any sights that were a must-see. Since I usually just land there, I don't know too much about Anchorage and need to make some recommendations if there are must-sees around there.

Anchorage is a nice place. Fairbanks, however, is closer to Alaska and therefore the airplane ticket is cheaper... ;-)

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