

## **Northern Waters Smokehaus Cookbook**

*Music from Zenith City by Woodblind*

Marie: You're listening to The Fish Dish, brought to you by Eat Wisconsin Fish, a campaign of the Wisconsin Sea Grant Program. Are you fish-curious? Or are you a fish expert who wants to learn even more about Wisconsin's fisheries and cooking fish? We'll give you the latest "dish" on fish.

Your hosts are . . .

Sharon: Sharon Moen

Marie: and Marie Zhuikov

Together: Two friends who have been working for Sea Grant seemingly forever and who know a thing or two about fish.

Marie: But that's "forever" in a good way.

Sharon: Sharon is a food-fish outreach coordinator.

Marie: and Marie is a science communicator.

Our show today features a new cookbook with fishy connections. The book's title is "Smoke on the Waterfront: The Northern Waters Smokehaus Cookbook." The Smokehaus has been described as a "cultural icon of Lake Superior cuisine." It's located in Duluth, Minnesota, inside the DeWitt Seitz Building in Canal Park on the shores of Lake Superior.

We're covering them on the Fish Dish because the Smokehaus uses fish from Wisconsin and because we both happen to be fans of the business and their cookbook. For the fish-o-licious part of this episode, we'll be cooking the Lake Superior Fish Chowder recipe from the book.

The Northern Waters Smokehaus has been offering fine deli goods since 1998. Its staff has grown from five people to more than fifty, cultivating a culture of culinary excellence and experimentation along the way. Besides being a favorite destination for locals and visitors, the Smokehaus ships their smoked fish, charcuterie, and more across the country. At one time, they even had their own restaurant.

They've been featured on the Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives" show, and were called out as one of America's best delis.

Their "Smoke on the Waterfront" cookbook was published in late 2023 and I had a chance to attend the launch event at the Smokehaus, where I met owners Eric and Lynn Goerdts and cookbook creators Ned Netzel, Mary Tennis, and Nic Peloquin.

The book launch featured a jazz band and the smoked fish and meats that have made the Smokehaus famous. Ned Netzel kicked things off.

Ned Netzel: I'm gonna say thank you all so much for coming to our new space to celebrate our new cookbook. Thank you to the Duluth Jazz Collective.

*Clapping and whooping*

Ned: My name is Ned and I would like to personally thank Eric and Lynn, who is somewhere around here, for having this really cool business that hired me and allowed me to help write a cookbook for it. It's really big, and uh, I'm gonna pass it off to, I think, Eric next.

Eric Goerdt: Yeah. We're so...(clapping) Mary wanted to do a cookbook a really long time ago, and I told her we weren't ready. Now we're ready. Even though Mary doesn't work for us anymore. But these, this crew, I didn't do any heavy lifting on the cookbook. I made a business and had this collective of great people that work with us. And these guys did a fantastic job capturing the soul of the smokehaus in this book. And now we're really excited to have the soul of the smokehaus back in a space where we can host people again.

*Crowd clapping: Yay!*

Marie: Then Mary Tennis, who wrote much of the book, had her time at the mic.

Mary Tennis: I started at the Smokehaus, like, in 2001. Like a single mom, working part time. I loved food. And then I started writing cheese descriptions.

Eric: Amazing cheese descriptions!

Mary: Yes. Mind-blowing cheese descriptions apparently. And from that, I think Eric just always, I mean, this is what he does, he does this with everyone. I'm not special. He fosters that passion and what makes each employee special. And so that's why this cookbook happened, is because he continued to support that in me.

Marie: Eric wrapped up by describing how the cookbook was created totally inhouse.

Eric: All of it is done by people that work at the Smokehaus. That's the thing. We didn't have other people make any part of this. The photographers are people that were part of the Smokehaus, and the writers, which is great. Because we want to come from a place of authenticity. And I hope we achieve it.

Crowd: Woohoo! Woo! Have fun!

*Crowd clapping, background noise, and jazz music.*

Marie: A few weeks later, Sharon and I were able to interview Ned Netzel and Nic Peloquin and talk more in depth about the cookbook and the philosophy behind it.

Ned: My name is Ned Netzel. I've been working at the Smokehouse for just shy of a decade, somewhere between eight and nine years. I started out kind of on the front lines making sandwiches. Working in the deli, doing a little bit of prep work and then I kind of moved more toward the deli and the customer facing work. Beyond that, I started writing for the blog a handful of years ago, and through that got not only the opportunity to work on this cookbook, but also part of our social media presence. So, I've done a little bit of a lot of stuff here.

Nic: I'm Nic Peloquin. I'm the current kitchen manager down at the Smokehaus. I started here about six years ago. Kind of done a little bit of everything. So yeah, kind of the back of the house food guy.

Marie: And what were your roles in the cookbook?

Ned: Mary Tennis, our coauthor, who was the general manager of the business at the time, she kind of green lit me to start compiling recipes. So, I kind of tried to get like as many recipes as I could into like sort of serviceable to begin the whittling down and the testing process. So, I gathered recipes, tried to reduce them as much as I could to home-kitchen volumes rather than like, mass-produced, you know, 100-pound volumes of meat.

Then once that was done, I realized that I needed some assistance. I needed some smarter people to help with the rest of the project. And so we brought on Nic he'll tell you more about this, but he's very smart with food and Mary, who is not only very smart with food, also a very good writer. Nic's a good writer too. I don't mean to besmirch Nic. Nic's a great writer. And so yeah, once, once we had sort of like the framework of what the recipes could be, then we worked together to really own it in and make sure every recipe was perfect.

Nic: Yeah, so my role is definitely more on the technical side and kind of filling in any of those gaps, knowledge wise, you know, from those production recipes, which were pretty sparse, you know, there's a lot of things that either get showed to you, just in person or are just kind of assumed, you know, and a lot of restaurant recipes tend to be that way, where it's sometimes just literally a list of ingredients and then no real instruction as to how to go about actually making it, so, yeah, that was kind of my focus in the cookbook. And then also just filling in any content gaps or, you know, doing recipe creation for the book that we wanted to speak a little more towards certain aspects of how to use the product or coming up with seasonal recipes to kind of round out any of the chapters.

Ned: A way to think about our roles too, is that we all kind of have similar skill sets and knowledge of the business and stuff, but, Mary is this really she kind of like understands culturally what's going on in the area. Nic is a burgeoning naturalist, knows a lot about like the animals and the landscapes around us and stuff. And I was like the technical writer, basically. And we kind of like, fuse that together into a really great team.

Marie: I was interested to see that there's ice cream in the cookbook.

Ned: Yeah, that's a nod to Northern Waters Restaurant, which also is where the Lake Superior Lake Trout chowder comes from. You know, I think Eric just has always really liked ice cream as a, you know, fun and kind of challenging thing to make. And that was sort of a flourish for the restaurant, was to have that as like a signature, you know, dessert, like a house-made ice cream.

Nic: Yeah, kind of a rotating flavor. So, that's part of the reason why there's a number of ice cream recipes is it's just kind of, that was their dessert, you know?

Ned: We wanted this book to be kind of holistic. We wanted to show you where you can, you know, use elements that maybe you wouldn't think to use of things. And we also wanted depth to it. You know, we wanted to not only have smoked meats in this, which, we maybe could have done that. We maybe could have just put out a cookbook that's just our smoked meats and smoked fish. And it might have done well. But, with this, you know, you can serve a whole feast, appetizers to desserts. It kind of was lacking in desserts. We had some options that we cut from it, but ice cream was one that stuck and made sense. And hey, you know, preserving your dairy by making ice cream!

Sharon: Where do you source your fish from? So, I know that some of your fish comes from Red Cliff Fish Company because I work with them too and sometimes, I pick up fish when they're dropping fish off to you. But do you use any of the other commercial fishers along the South Shore of Lake Superior?

Nic: Yeah, we definitely will use Bodine's every once in a while to kind of fill in some gaps, you know, they're kind of the most regular fishery that we work with. And then we do have a fisherman, I want to say, Dick Martin, maybe? It's his name. He works on the, on the South Shore. And then also we do work with Dave Rogatsky. He's not fishing out of Lake Superior. He's working up in Alaska seasonally, but, a local Duluthian. And then obviously we try to source as much fish as possible from Red Cliff. They're definitely our number one go-to source, especially for lake trout.

Sharon: So, if I were a customer coming to your store and buying some smoked fish, how long can I keep it? And does it need to be refrigerated?

Nic: Yes, definitely needs to be refrigerated. And we recommend three weeks from the time that it is smoked. And that's kind of our, our window of opportunity there. There's a lot of hearsay about like, 'Oh, it's smoked fish. It's preserved. It's fine. It's salted.' But that's kind of our hard line is that three-week period. That's when it's the best to eat anyway. You know, you push it further past that point and it may or may not be safe, but it's, it's definitely not going to be the best quality.

Ned: Working in the deli, people will say that they're going to catch a flight home or drive to, you know, back home or whatever. Sometimes even at the cost of maybe disappointing a customer and leaving with them, not buying something, we really try to ingrain in them, you know, you're going to want to refrigerate it. You're going to want it on ice. We have these options for you, but, you know, if you're going to be driving a long time and don't have a cooler that you can restock with ice, like, maybe don't buy the fish here. You know, we do have a nationwide mail order service where you can get our fish sent to you and that's a much safer option when you've got far to go, because we make sure it's properly refrigerated when it's sent to you. And it's no joke. We don't want people to just wing it. And we definitely try to communicate that with customers. So, I would rather send a customer home without any smoked fish, but you know, alive so they could come back. *(Laughs)*

Marie: Yeah, you don't want to lose a customer that way. For the mail order business, how do you refrigerate it, do you use like dry ice or what?

Nic: We have dry ice packs and then we use some re recycled materials. I think it's actually recycled denim insulation. And so, the boxes are shipped with and delivered within 48 hours. And so, we, we have that small window. You know, and we get a lot of calls from people too, where it's like, 'Oh, I shipped fish to Florida. It's been on my door for a day or two. Is it going to be fine?' It's like, well, check the temperature first. Primarily you want it to be in the within the safe zone. But yeah, it's definitely a common question people ask is, 'How safe is the fish that I forgot about?'

Sharon: I would love to know what your favorite recipe, especially fish recipes, are in the book.

Nic: Um, my favorite fish recipe right now is definitely the eelpout etouffee. Commonly referred to as burbot and eelpout kind of interchangeably. A little bit of a misnomer, I believe, to call it eelpout. I think burbot is the more correct name, but when we were naming the recipe, I felt the alliteration was more important than being exactly specific. But it's a great recipe. You know, it's, it's one of those fish that is not really targeted. You know, it's kind of considered a trash fish when you're ice fishing.

And it's also one of those fish that is only available really in the winter outside of a commercial fishing operation because they're hanging out at the bottom of the lake and in the coldest waters most of the time and they don't really move away from that until it is so cold. So, it was great to kind of incorporate that into the cookbook to once again show that there are these little hidden gems in the region that people don't really think of.

And I love the texture of it too. It is really a hidden gem. It's so close to shellfish, the texture of the flesh and, you know, it's referred to as the poor man's lobster. A lot of fishermen will boil it in Sprite and serve it with butter and, you know, in a similar way to you would shellfish, but it also is just a warming recipe for that wintertime, you know, it has a little bit of spice to it and a little tomato. It's one of those recipes that fills you up and warms you up, too.

Sharon: Nice.

Nic: Yeah, so etouffee is like a fish stew out of like Cajun and Creole cuisine. So, it's traditionally made with crayfish or shrimp, that's shellfish. And, and that's kind of where the idea to use eelpout came from, is to use it interchangeably because it is, it is so similar to shellfish. And so, it's, it's really basic. It highlights a lot of the foundations of Cajun and Creole cuisine using a really dark roux using the Holy Trinity, they call it, which is onion, bell pepper and celery, and then garlic as well.

And, and so it's a very approachable recipe, but you know, something that we may not be as exposed to this far north. We do have the connection, you know, the Mississippi River. Foodways, go two ways. Migration happens to and from. So, I'm sure there has been etouffee made here before, but, definitely highlights some local ingredients is cool to do.

Marie: How's the reaction been to the cookbook, what have you heard from people?

Ned: It's been overwhelmingly positive, which is really great for us and our egos. I'm kind of waiting for the bad reviews to come in. I don't know exactly how the book is doing nationwide, but it, it seems really good. People are buying the books out of our store. They're coming to our events. They've been cooking stuff with our recipes and sending us pictures of the results and that makes us feel really good. That we wrote something that is true and useful. Um, and just that conversation.

Sharon: Photos are beautiful.

Ned: Thank you.

Marie: At the cookbook launch, I had a chance to speak with bookseller Jean Sramek. Jean works for Zenith Bookstore in Duluth so a lot of books cross through her hands and she's a good judge.

Jean Sramek: Oh, cookbooks are my jam. I'm a home cook, not a professional, but, you know, I'm a pretty good home cook, and I love cookbooks. I've been a fan of Northern Water's food since as long as I can remember and of all of their restaurant projects that they've done. So, it was really exciting when they came out with this book.

I have the advanced reader copy, and for those of you who don't know what that is, it's an advanced copy of a book that goes to bookstores and reviewers and, and people like that. And at Zenith, when we get an ARC of a cookbook, they just sort of hand it to me.

Marie: Laughs

Jean: Because every cookbook has a story to tell. A great cookbook is just an introduction into someone's philosophy about food. It's an introduction into a place sometimes. It's a great way to travel, and I think that this cookbook is a really good example of that. Of how it's a balance between really great recipes and also a story to tell.

Another thing I look for in cookbooks is a nice balance between illustration and text, you know, when you get into the recipes. And this one is also just laid out really nicely and easy to navigate.

Marie: Now we're back to Nic and Ned for some closing thoughts.

Marie: I was just wondering if there's anything else you think we should know about the cookbook or the business, or fish or yourselves, or whatever.

Nic: I would implore everyone to come visit us down in our new space in the Dewitt Seitz. We just moved from the first floor and a tiny little offshoot of the loading dock that we've, that the business has been in for 25 years. And now we're in the basement space of the Dewitt Seitz. So, we have room to host everyone and got tap beer and a fantastic wine selection. So, it's one of the few places you can come have a little beverage and shop for your fish. Come down and see it.

Ned: And I think I would like to say about the cookbook that our approach to writing it very much was we wanted to pay homage, not only to our recipes and our business that we have created, but also to the region. And there's room in this book for everybody. Even if you burn every single thing you cook and try to avoid the kitchen in general, but if you love Smokehaus products, when you're enjoying your Cajun Finn sandwich, if you have this book, you could know the process behind that Cajun salmon. It's very detail oriented. We don't just sort of hand-wave certain processes. We try to break them down like to their most granular elements so that you can have a more detailed understanding of preservation and food preparation and stuff. So, if you're a fan of the Smokehaus but afraid of the idea of smoking, you still might enjoy the cookbook because it's pretty well-written. We put our time into making sure it's honest and useful and factual and everything you want a good cookbook to be. It's our love letter to our region, our coworkers, our supporters, and food itself.

#### *Music from Zenith City by Woodblind*

Marie: Now it's time for the Fish-o-Licious part of our podcast, where we discuss fish recipes which you can find on the Eat Wisconsin Fish website (which is [eatwisconsinfish.org](http://eatwisconsinfish.org)). Today we're cooking Lake Superior Fish Chowder, or, as they say it on the East Coast, "chowdah."

Sharon: All right, we are in the process of making Lake Superior Chowder, and I am stirring up the roux, which is composed of butter and rice flour. And meanwhile, Marie is cooking potatoes and some clam juice, and then starting to sauté some bacon, which is going to be used to sweat some vegetables out soon.

Marie: Yeah, for this recipe, you need a lot of burners. So, you need four burners. *(Laughs)*

Sharon: And possibly four hands.

Marie: Yes. Maybe six.

Sharon: Yeah, we're supposed to be doing three things at once. So far we're doing pretty well, given that there's two of us and three things.

Marie: Yep, I pre chopped all the veggies and the potatoes and the, and you need to dice the bacon and everything. So that's been really helpful. I'm gonna set the timer now for the potatoes.

Sharon: And I'm supposed to be whisking this roux until it smells a little smoky. Might be a while yet.

Marie: Yeah. But yes, the Northern Waters Smokehaus folks say about this recipe that, it's not a set and forget recipe. It's a pain in the ass, but it's worth it. So, and also this recipe, it's a New England style chowder. And it has approval by a person from Maine. So, you know, it's gotta be good if someone from Maine likes it. *(Laughs)*

Sharon: I just want to say, my chowder that I created, the Milwaukee version of chowder, is similar in many ways. But what I like about my chowder is it has smoked fish and fresh fish. And also, a bottle of beer in it. And this one, there's no beer.

Marie: There's brandy though.

Sharon: Okay, well yeah, that's true. And that's pretty Wisconsin.

Marie: Yeah. And our lake trout today is from Bodin's Fishery from Bayfield. I bought it at a local grocery store in Duluth.

Sharon: Alright, I feel like we should talk about chowder in general and how it came to be.

Marie: Yeah, where did it, ah, originate from?

Sharon: So, according to lore, um, immigrants from England and France and seafarers brought the chowder to North America more than 250 years ago. And, uh, it could be a shipboard dish thickened with hardtack. And some think it may have originated among the Breton fishermen, a Celtic ethnic group. Native to Brittany in Northwestern France. And so, it's like a seafaring food. That's how it ended up in New England.

Marie: Oh, okay, so it didn't come from New England.

Sharon: No, but, uh, certainly New England made it popular.

Sharon: Now I'm whisking the roux into the sweated vegetables and bacon. And now Marie is taking over with the wooden spoon for our pain in the ass chowder. *(Laughs)*

So, the word chowder is actually a corruption of the French word for cauldron, which is likely how they made it on the ships, with big old cauldrons over a fire. It's amazing more ships didn't actually get destroyed by fire. Clam chowder was so popular in the mid-1800s that Herman Melville described its flavor in "Moby Dick" in 1851. Shall I read you the quote?

Marie: Yes, please, because I'm pouring the broth and the potatoes into the veggies.

Sharon: Yeah, Marie's hands are full. So anyway, I will quote Melville from "Moby Dick." In that book he writes, "But when that smoking chowder came in, the mystery was delightfully explained. Oh, sweet friends, hearken to me. It was made of small, juicy clams, scarcely bigger than hazelnuts, mixed with pounded ship biscuits and salt pork cut up into flakes, the whole enriched with butter. And plentifully seasoned with pepper and salt. We dispatched it with great expectation."

Marie: We dispatched it!

Sharon: We dispatched our chowder. Wow, that is so thick.

Marie: Really thick. I think we might need more broth, actually.

Sharon: Yeah, yeah. Oh, my goodness. We haven't put the fish in yet, but it's already looking like a thickened stew more than what I would call a chowder. So, from the recipe that is in the Northern Waters Smokehaus book, we have cut it down to a quarter. Because it was asking for a gallon, like over a gallon of fish broth.

There are four core components to traditional chowder. One is seafood, and that could be like clams, or lobster, or fish in our case. We're using lake trout. And the seasonings, typically it's with whole ingredients like diced onions, celery, bacon, and herbs. Then there's the liquid, which can be milk or cream for the New England-type of clam chowder. Or red broth, made with tomatoes and spices, for the Manhattan-type of clam chowder. Or clear broth, made from clam juice, which is known as a Rhode Island chowder. And then you have the thickener. And most recipes use some sort of ingredient to thicken, like cornstarch. In our case, we used rice flour, wheat flour. And some people use potatoes. We have potatoes in ours, too.

And here's a good surprise. You could make a gallon of this and it freezes really well.

Marie: Yeah, that'd be great. Lunches for weeks!

Sharon: For weeks! Well, today outside here it is going to be a high of 18 degrees. And I feel like chowder is just the perfect thing for a chilly winter's day.

Marie: Yes, so I just added the cream. In our case we're using evaporated milk because cream is like too over the top. And we have to add the Tabasco sauce and the Worcestershire sauce. Worcestershire sauce.

Sharon: Yeah, good luck saying that one.

Marie: Worcestershire. Yes, and then the fish.

Sharon: How many types of chowder do you think there are?

Marie: I know of two, but...

Sharon: You know there's more.

Marie: I know there's more because I saw your notes. But normally I'd say the Manhattan and the New England, but I know there's one more.

Sharon: And then the Rhode Island, I just talked about that. And then there's my version, the Milwaukee fish chowder. That is on the Eat Wisconsin Fish website, which I am quite proud of, and people have really enjoyed making, I've heard. And then there's also West Coast and East Coast chowders. The biggest difference amongst all these chowders is the type of broth that is being used.



So, I got the privilege of filleting the skin off the trout and the trout was big enough. The lake trout from Lake Superior was big enough, we only needed one fillet and that was equal to a pound and a quarter almost, right?

Marie: Yeah.

Sharon: So, it was a nice big fish, looked beautiful, probably came out of the lake a day or two ago.

Marie: You put the fish in and then you just cook it for three more minutes and it should be done.

Sharon: Yeah, fish cooks surprisingly quickly and I think, again, I've said it before on some of our shows, is probably the biggest sin for cooking fish is overcooking it. But in a chowder, I don't know if you could over cook it. *(Laughs)*

Marie: This is really thick.

Sharon: Wow. It is. It is.

Marie: We added extra broth to it.

Sharon: We might have to note that in the recipe.

Marie: Reflect that in the recipe.

Sharon: And you'll be able to find the recipe thanks to the Northern Water Smokehaus guys who said we could put it on the Eat Wisconsin Fish website. This will be our fourth chowder recipe, I think.

Marie: On the website?

Sharon: Yeah. We already have three other, at least three other chowder recipes there.

Marie: Let's see if this fish is ready.

Sharon: Ooh, Marie's getting a taste test. It's steaming.

Marie: Steaming lake trout.

Sharon: That's it.

Marie: Steaming hot lake trout!

Sharon: *(Laughs)* Good to go?

Marie: I'd say the fish is cooked and we can have lunch!

Sharon: Yay!

Marie: What do you think, Sharon?

Sharon: I think it's delicious. It's so much tangier than some of our other recipes. And I think it's the combination of the lemon zest, lemon, and the Worcestershire sauce. Tabasco never hurts either.

Marie: Tabasco too, yeah.

Sharon: I don't feel the Tabasco heat.

Marie: No.

Sharon: There's a nice tang to the creamy sauce. What do you think?

Marie: Yeah, I think it's very good. It's different than what I'm used to, but it's a good difference.

Sharon: Yes. Yes, I agree. I agree. I think it's a keeper recipe.

Sharon: One thing I'll say is it's hard for me to get enough fish in a chowder. I would put more fish in because I want **more** fish.

Marie: Or you could put clams in too.

Sharon: Oh yeah, yeah.

Marie: But then it wouldn't be like Superior. *(Laughs)*

Sharon: That's true, that's true.

Sharon and Marie: You can pretend there's zebra mussels.

Sharon: Some of those invaders, take them out. No, I, but it's beautiful. But that would be my only critique is like more fish.

*Music from Zenith City by Woodblind*

Marie: That's it for this episode of The Fish Dish. Thanks goes to a long list of people. That includes Eric Goerdts, Ned Netzel, Mary Tennis and Nic Peloquin from Northern Waters Smokehaus and Jean Sramek from Zenith Bookstore.

Thank you for listening!