

## Cooking Sous Vide at Home

Here at McCrady's, we utilize a cooking technique known as "sous vide" for nearly everything. "Sous vide" literally means "under vacuum." For an excellent description of sous vide, we've turned to [www.cuisinetechology.com](http://www.cuisinetechology.com):

Until recently, sous vide cooking was the province of large institutional kitchens. Now it's helping redefine dining experiences in many of the world's most renowned restaurants. Developed in France 30 years ago as a way to prepare delicate foie gras, sous vide is a gentle, low-temperature technique in which vacuum packed ingredients are slowly simmered in 180-200°F water.

The results are fantastic and far-reaching:

- **Enhanced Succulence** — Sous vide's gentle heating gradually breaks down meat fibers and proteins, tenderizing and intensifying flavors as food cooks in its own juices.
- **Enhanced Sensory Quality** — Low-temperature sous vide cooking helps prevent the collagens in salmon and other naturally moist fish from breaking down, preserving their rich taste and velvety textures. Sous vide cooking also helps retain the bright colors of fruit and vegetables, greatly enhancing their presentation.
- **Enhanced Nutritional Quality** — The sous vide technique is so gentle that it preserves many nutritional qualities that other cooking methods tend to destroy. Moreover, sous vide cooking requires little if any butter or oil, making it ideal for the preparation of low-fat dishes.

Sous vide isn't only for restaurants, though. It can be very easy to do at home, and it will give you all of the same advantages it gives us. You'll be amazed at how it can improve the quality of your meals. Once you begin playing around with it, you'll discover how easy it is and how much better food tastes.

All you need to cook sous vide at home is a FoodSaver vacuum packer (several models are available at finer kitchen stores or on the Internet for under \$50) and a thermometer. Any thermometer will work, but we prefer extremely accurate digital thermometers in our kitchen. Just adjust the heat setting on the stove until your water bath reaches the desired temperature. Then monitor the temperature with your thermometer. When cooking sous vide at home, I use my grandmother's crock pot. These work great and will hold a desired temperature without any fuss for long periods of time.

And even if you don't have a FoodSaver, you can place ingredients in a Ziploc bag and remove as much air as possible. Just remember to wrap the Ziploc bag in several layers of plastic wrap to form a watertight seal.

One of the biggest advantages of cooking sous vide is the convenience. You can do most of the work a day ahead, and then just heat it up on the stove when it's time to serve. As with any food, be careful not to cook things too far in advance or they may spoil.

The following recipe is a great introduction to the art of sous vide cooking – it's simple and classic, but you'll find a surprising depth of flavor.

**Wild King Salmon**  
**with Carrot Confit and Arugula-Crab Salad**  
Serves 4

**For the Salmon:**

4 eight-ounce pieces of Wild King Salmon, cut about 1 inch thick  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

**For the Carrot Confit:**

5-6 baby carrots per person depending on the size.  
½ cup of carrot juice  
2 tablespoons of butter

**For the Arugula-Crab Salad:**

½ pound of baby arugula  
2 ounces fresh crab per person  
1 tablespoon of lemon juice  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

**For the Sous Vide preparation:**

For the sous vide preparation of this dish, you will need two pots of water on the stovetop. One pot needs to be set at 160 degrees F for the carrots. The other pot needs to be at 124 degrees for the salmon.

Just adjust the heat on your range until your thermometer reads the correct temperature. The carrots take about 3 hours, so they need to be cooked in advance. Use your thermometer to check the temperature of your baths every so often.

**For the Carrot Confit:**

Wash and peel the baby carrots, then cut them down the center. Place the carrots in a food saver bag with the carrot juice and seal. Place this in the 160-degree bath for 3 hours or until soft. Check the carrots by pinching them every hour or so. When the carrots are soft, put them aside. The cooking time will depend on the size of the carrots so just check them over the last 30 minutes by pinching them.

**For the Arugula-Crab Salad:**

This should be finished right before the dish hits the table. Simply combine the ingredients in a mixing bowl and toss very gently.

**For the Salmon:**

Place the salmon and the extra virgin olive oil into a food saver bag and seal. Place the salmon into the 124-degree bath for 14 minutes if your filets are about an inch thick. If they are a thinner, decrease the time by 4 minutes; if they are thicker, add 4 minutes.

To finish the dish, place the carrots into a saucepan with all the juices from the bag. Reheat them over very high heat. When the juice has reduced to a syrup, pull them off the stove and swirl in the butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Remove the salmon from its bag and season to taste with salt and pepper. Place the salmon over the carrots and garnish with the arugula-crab salad.

This should be a great starting point. I look forward to hearing about your results and answering any questions that you may have.