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## ABOUT CAVIAR

Caviar may be simply defined to many as being "fish eggs". A true definition can be derived from any dictionary which will explain it as being the processed salted roe of large fish (Sturgeon & Salmon) prepared as an appetizer.

**Fine caviar is never salty, extremely bitter or fishy in flavor.** Caviar should have 5% or less salt added per weight. Good caviar should smell like fresh salt water. Caviar should have an unbroken glistening thin outer membrane with distinct individual roe. The inner yolk or oil should have a viscosity like honey and the eggs should rotate slowly in a container at room temperature. Taste should be an enjoyable mild cure with no excessive lingering aftertastes.

Good caviar is always expensive. Many people are curious as to the reason for this. The answer is that world demand is greater than the supply. Consumers should be wary of excellent deals in caviar or low prices. **Many times consumers have tried poor Caviar and have left the experience with the thinking that they do not enjoy it.** A reputable supplier specializes in distinguishing quality caviar and conducts business within and above government standards and guidelines. Do not be afraid to ask a lot of questions. An excellent supplier prices caviar according to quality.

## STORING CAVIAR

Caviar is packaged in many forms. The two most common retail packages are vacuum-packed glass jars or tins. Generally the ideal storage temperature of caviar is -2 to +2 degrees (salt in caviar lowers the freezing point and so the colder, the better). For short term storage an ordinary refrigerator temperature is sufficient. Store in the back of a refrigerator and not on the front door. There is much inquiry as to how long Caviar can be stored. There is no safe generalization which may be made as there are innumerable factors (salt levels, time of processing, pasteurization, preserving methods, etc.) to take into account. It is very important to look for an Expiry or Best Before date on the package. All Caviar should be consumed within 3 or 4 days once it is opened.

## SERVING CAVIAR

Serving caviar is largely a matter of personal taste. Expert tasters tend to keep it simple by enjoying it au naturel and follow a few basic principles. Etiquette dictates that caviar of the highest grades, such as sturgeon, should not be garnished at all and should be enjoyed for its own special and unique flavor.

The consensus concerning the best accompanying drinks tend to be mineral water, non-flavored vodka, semi-dry and dry champagnes and sparkling wines. These drinks allow the full flavor and taste of caviar to be experienced and enjoyed. In a romantic setting, serve with a chilled sparkling wine of comparable quality to the caviar. For a real party atmosphere, serve with ice cold shots of Vodka.

The idea of being able to enjoy the natural flavor of caviar has led to traditional serving with neutral tasting bases (with no salt) such as: plain white or toasted bread, buckwheat or regular blinis, hard boiled eggs, potato pancakes, rice, and crackers. Accompaniments which do not detract from the unique tastes of caviar are crème fraiche, avocado, sour cream and unsalted butter. For all thicker shelled Caviar eggs (Arctic Caviar, Hudson Bay Caviar or Caviar Direct's Standard Black Caviar), it is best to serve with toast so that they break easier and the flavor is released without excess chewing. Caviar containing more salt (Lumpfish) may be added freely as a desired substitute for dishes requiring salt flavoring.

Caviar is undoubtedly one of the easiest but most exciting foods to serve. This makes it ideal for caterers and food service professionals. Simply lay out neutral bases (crackers, French bread, blinis), dishes of light tasting accompaniments (shallots, onions, sour cream, unsalted butter, etc.) and the caviar. If the caviar is expensive then have the beverage server prepare the amounts. Caviar is perfect for those under money, time and food preparation constraints.

Serving utensils and implements, designed to reduce damage to the roe have traditionally been made of: mother-of-pearl, wood, porcelain, glass, ivory, horn and gold. Inquire about our complete line of Caviar serving products. Metals which oxidize easily (i.e.; silver) have been known to impart a metallic taste and thus they are not preferred by very serious aficionados. There are some who like to add caviar to recipes. As a rule it is essential not to overcook caviar for it will toughen and lose flavor. Caviar is best added ala minute to impart its flavor to soups and sauces or after cooking is complete.

As a final note on serving caviar (and hopefully without sounding pretentious) be sure to provide the proper ambiance. Caviar is meant to be enjoyed as one of those wonderful and simple pleasures in life like great art or serious music. Enjoyed with a little ceremony or attention to detail it can truly make one feel like they are "living" rather than just "existing". There are many types of caviar at many different price levels so feel free to experiment. One is only limited by their imagination!

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