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How to prepare pike from the Compleat Angler by Izaak Walton, year 1653.

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How to Prepare Pike from The Compleat
Angler by Izaak Walton, year 1653

First, open your pike at the gills, and if need be, cut also a little slit towards the belly. Out of these take his guts and keep his liver which you are to shred very small with thyme, sweet marjoram, and a little winter-savory. To these put some pickled oysters and some anchovies, two or three. Use these last whole, for the anchovies will melt, and the oysters should not. To these you must add also a pound of sweet butter which you are to mix with the herbs that are shred, and let them all be well salted. If the pike be more than a yard long, then you may put into these herbs more than a pound; or if he be less, then less butter will suffice. These being thus mixed, with a blade or two of mace, must be put into the pike's belly and then his belly so sewed up as to keep all the butter in his belly if it be possible; if not, then as much of it as you possibly can. But take not off the scales.

Then you are to thrust the spit through his mouth, out at his tail; and then take four, or five or six split sticks, or very thin laths, and a convenient quantity of tape or filleting. These laths are to be tied around about the pike's body from his head to his tail and the tape tied somewhat thick to prevent his breaking or falling off from the spit. Let him be roasted very leisurely and often basted with claret-wine, anchovies, and butter, mixed together, with what moisture falls from him into the pan.

When you have roasted him sufficiently, you are to hold under him, when you unwind or cut the tape that ties him, such a dish as you purpose to eat him out of and let him fall into it with the sauce that is roasted in his belly. By this means the pike will be kept unbroken and complete. Then, to the sauce which was within, and also that sauce in the pan, you are to add a fit quantity of the best butter, and to squeeze the juice of three or four oranges. Lastly, you may either put into the pike, with the oyster, two cloves of garlic, and take it whole out when the pike is cut off the spit; or, to give the sauce a haut-gout, let the dish into which you let the pike fall be rubbed with it. The using or not using of this garlic is left to your discretion.

This dish of meat is too good for any but anglers, or very honest men. I trust you will prove both, and therefore I have trusted you with this secret.