

## You CAN Do Fish and Seafood

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How confident do you feel with selecting and preparing fish and seafood?

*"I enjoy eating fish and seafood but only do so when I order it in a restaurant.*

*It's too scary for me to prepare it at home."*

-- Cooking Class Attendee

Despite an increase in consumption in recent years, selecting and cooking fish and seafood is quite daunting for many people. From how to choose fresh fish or seafood, to what to do once it is purchased, it can all feel overwhelming.

From a nutritional standpoint, fish and seafood are great sources of lean protein providing omega 3 and other important nutrients for healthy living such as vitamins B-complex, D and A. Versatility is also one of fish and seafood's strong points - they can easily be served as an appetizer or entree, in a soup or stew, as a component of breakfast or brunch, or in a salad.

*(Note: Those with fish, shellfish or crustacean allergies should avoid handling and consuming fish and seafood.)*

### HOW TO BUY

The key to enjoying great tasting fish or seafood is to start with fresh products. Here are a few tips for selecting fish and seafood.

#### **1. Buy from a reputable dealer or market.**

Buy from those with demonstrated records of safe food handling practices, such as keeping their products properly refrigerated or on fresh, clean ice. Avoid roadside-type stands which may not source and/or store fish and seafood properly.

#### **2. Smell before you buy.**

Fresh fish or seafood should smell clean and fresh, or a bit briny like the sea, but not fishy, off, sour or pungent. Pass it up if it does not smell right.

#### **3. For whole fish, check the eyes, gills and scales.**

Look for clear, bright eyes and gills that are rich, red color. Scales should be shiny and metallic-looking and the fish should feel firm to the touch.

#### **4. For frozen fish, check for signs of thawing and re-freezing.**

There should be no frost or ice crystals on the frozen fish or seafood. Also, avoid purchasing packages that look damaged or partially open.

#### **5. Keep it cool.**

Buy fresh or frozen fish and seafood at the end of your shopping trip and go directly home to refrigerate or freeze it. For periods longer than 30 minutes, place the fish or seafood in a cooler with ice.

For further information on selecting fish and seafood and sustainability, check out these links -

- US Food and Drug Administration - <https://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers/ucm077331.htm>
- NY Sea Grant - Seafood Savvy Guidebook - <http://www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/seafood/pdfs/SeafoodSavvy.pdf>

- Monterey Bay Aquarium's "Seafood Watch" - <http://www.seafoodwatch.org/>

## **STORAGE**

**Fresh fish** may be stored in the refrigerator in its original wrapper for up to 2 days after purchase. If it will be longer than that before it is prepared wrap it tightly in a moisture-proof bag and store it in the freezer. Fish that has been "previously frozen" and thawed at the market should not be refrozen. Prepare it within 2 days of purchase.

**Fresh shellfish** purchased in their shells can be stored in a shallow container covered with a moist paper towel (not airtight) and refrigerated. Use mussels and clams within 2 days, and oysters within 7 days of purchase. Discard any shellfish with broken or cracked shells, or those that die during storage. Shellfish without shells can be placed in a tightly sealed container and frozen for up to 3 months.

**Frozen fish and seafood** should be kept frozen until ready to use. Prior to cooking, thaw frozen fish or seafood gradually in the refrigerator overnight. To thaw it more quickly, place the fish or seafood in a sealed plastic bag, then immersing the bag in a large bowl of cold water. Change the water often to keep it cold. Do not thaw and refreeze fish or seafood.

## **HOW TO PREPARE**

Fish and seafood are generally quick to prepare making them good choices for busy weeknights as well as for special events on the weekend. Choose from a wide array of cooking methods - grilling, roasting, broiling, pan frying, sautéing, and poaching.

A few simple preparation ideas include:

- Season fish or seafood with a sprinkle of favorite herbs and/or spices before cooking. Choose your favorites or try one of these [spice or herb rubs](#).
- Serve cooked fish with a pat of [herb-lemon compound butter](#) - using this easy recipe from the New York Times food editor, Sam Sifton.
- Marinate fish or seafood in a light vinaigrette for 15 - 30 minutes prior to cooking. Make your favorite vinaigrette recipe or try this [easy balsamic marinade](#).

*(NOTE: When marinating any fish or seafood, remember to discard the marinade after use. Do not save it to use as a sauce on the cooked fish or seafood.)*

### **Cooking Basics - Fish and Seafood**

	<b>Approximate Cooking Time</b>	<b>Check for Doneness</b>
Fish	5 minutes per 1/2 inch of thickness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal temperature of 145°F when thermometer inserted in thickest part</li> <li>• should appear white-opaque and flaky, with the exception of tuna which turns tan or beige</li> </ul>
Shrimp and Scallops	3 -5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shrimp will turn white-opaque and their tails will turn pink</li> <li>• scallops should be cooked until they are just firm and opaque.</li> </ul>
Lobster	5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appears white-opaque and their shells turns red</li> </ul>
Clams, Oyster, Mussels (in closed shells)	When shells open; discard any that remain closed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shells open; appear plump and opaque</li> </ul>
Shucked Clams and Oysters	2 - 5 minutes, depending on size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• edges will start to curl</li> </ul>