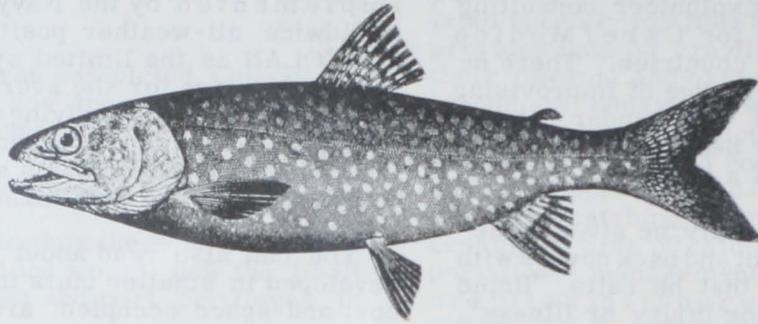


FOOD FISH FACTS



LAKE TROUT

(*Salvelinus namaycush*)

Lake trout, members of the salmon family, are the largest trout in North America. Lake trout are also known as namaycush, mackinaw, togue, longue, Great Lakes trout, and forktail trout, names given them by Indians, French Canadians, and other trout fishermen. The name namaycush is of Algonquin origin, a language stock spoken by many Indian tribes from Labrador to Carolina and westward to the Great Plains country. Lake trout are highly valued as commercial food fish as well as being sought after by sport fishermen.

DESCRIPTION

Lake trout vary widely in color with shades of gray and olive predominating. There are variations in the color of the flesh ranging from pale ivory to deep pink. It is thought that these color differences are probably determined partly by environment as well as heredity. Much of the body is mottled with light gray or whitish spots and these profuse markings extend over the head and on the deeply forked tail. Lake trout have the same moderately elongated body form shared by other trout and salmon. Head, eyes, and the mouth of these fish are large and the jaws are strongly toothed. All fins are without spines and the body is covered with small scales. Several races or subspecies of lake trout appear to exist, one found at moderate depths in the Great Lakes and in inland lakes, while another, the siscowet, frequents much deeper waters of Lakes Superior and Michigan. The siscowet, generally considered too oily for ordinary use, is usually smoked for market.

Size and growth rate of lake trout seem to vary from one body of water to another. Over the years, lake trout have established impressive records. The largest authentic angling record in North America was a 63 pound, 2 ounce fish caught in Lake Superior in 1952; and the largest on record, 49.5 inches long and weighing 102 pounds, was caught in Lake Athabaska, Saskatchewan in 1961. The average lake trout taken commercially is usually from 4 to 5 pounds.

HABITAT

Lake trout live principally in large, cool, fresh-water lakes of northern North America. Their range extends from Alaska eastward to the Labrador Peninsula, south to northern New England, and west through New York, the Great Lakes drainage basin, the northern margin of the Mississippi River watershed in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and the headwaters of the Columbia and Fraser Rivers and Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Lake trout have been successfully introduced into western lakes. These fish prefer deeper waters, as a rule; however, they move about extensively and may be found at any depth during certain seasons and in certain localities. Lake trout in the Great Lakes are usually more abundant at depths between 100 and 300 feet. Although they usually live at or near the bottom, they may sometimes be found in open water far offshore. In smaller inland lakes in the southern part of their range, the warming of the surface waters restricts them to deep waters in summer. Lake trout seldom school and even the young are scattered and seem to have solitary habits.

LAKE TROUT FISHING

Commercial fishing for lake trout in the Great Lakes is done almost entirely with the use of gill nets with a mesh size of 4-7 inches. A lesser amount is taken in gill nets with a 7-1/8 to 14-inch mesh. Most sport fishing is done by trolling; however, "bobbing" through the ice is a well-known and popular method with sportsmen.

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The commercial production of lake trout in the upper Great Lakes fluctuated from a high yield to almost catastrophic collapse due to the invasion of the sea lamprey. Federal, Provincial, and State agencies of the United States and Canada worked together in an international body, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, which was established by treaty in 1955, to overcome this disaster. Their combined efforts resulted in the discovery, by a scientist of the United States Department of Interior's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, of a chemical that is toxic to sea lamprey larvae but harmless to other animal forms. This research, as well as the use of electrical

and mechanical traps which intercept spawning lamprey, has resulted in a marked decrease in the sea lamprey population. Lake trout are increasing in the Great Lakes and there is hope that they will be soon restored to their former level of importance in the commercial and sport fishery.

Lake trout are being restocked in freshwater lakes with young fish raised in fish hatcheries. This enterprise has developed into a successful commercial industry in many states. Interest is also being shown in a hybrid variety, a cross between lake trout and brook trout called splake, which has potential for the future lake fishery.

USES OF LAKE TROUT

Lake trout have firm-textured flesh that is rich in flavor and very tasty. The white to pinkish tinted flesh is high in protein and is rather oily with high-energy value. Lake trout are available whole or filleted and may be baked, pan-fried, sauteed, or poached. (National Marketing Services Office, NMFS, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 100 East Ohio St., Room 526, Chicago, Illinois 60611)

